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PUBLIC HOUSING

Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Federal Works Agency - John M. Carmody, Administrator

Vol. 1, No. 42 - May 28, 1940

U. S. Housing Authority - Nathan Straus, Administrator

C. F. Palmer Elected New NAHO President

At the business session concluding the Eighth Annual Meeting of the National Association of Housing Officials, C. F. Palmer, Atlanta businessman and Chairman of the Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta, was elected President for the coming year.

The new list of officers follows:

President: C. F. Palmer, Chairman, Housing Authority of the City of Atlanta.

Vice Presidents: George E. Evans, Chairman, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh. Edward Weinfeld, New York State Commissioner of Housing.

Board of Governors:

Nathan Straus, Administrator of USHA. John Fahey, Chairman, Federal Home Loan Bank Board.

Bleecker Marquette, Consultant, Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority.

Nicola Giulii, Chairman, Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles.

C.-E. A. Winslow, Chairman, The Housing Authority of the City of New Haven, and Chairman, Committee on the Hygiene of Housing, American Public Health Association.

James L. Stephenson, Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Dallas.

W. W. Alexander, Administrator of the Farm Security Administration.

Ernest J. Bohn, Director, Cleveland Metropolitan Housing Authority.

Miles L. Colean, Director, 20th Century Fund Housing Survey.

Jesse Epstein, Executive Director, Housing Authority of the City of Seattle.

Col. L. Kemper Williams, Chairman, Housing Authority of New Orleans.

Carleton F. Sharpe, Manager of Green Hills, Cincinnati, and Chairman of Management Division of NAHO.

Director of NAHO: Coleman Woodbury.

Assistant Director of NAHO: Edmond Hoben. Chief of Field Service of NAHO: Carl Henry Monsees.

The Management Division of NAHO, in its First Annual Meeting, elected the following officers:

Carleton F. Sharpe of Cincinnati, Chairman; B. J. Hovde of Pittsburgh, Vice-Chairman. Members of the Executive Council, 3-year term, Abraham Goldfeld of New York and Raymond A. Voigt of Milwaukee; for the 2-year term, Lionel Artis of Indianapolis and J. Stanley Raffety of Cincinnati; for the 1-year term, Eugene Oppermann of Detroit and James L. Stephenson of Dallas.

Rural Housing Stressed by NAHO In Annual Meeting at Pittsburgh

The first session of the Eighth Annual Meeting of NAHO (held in Pittsburgh May 15-18) was devoted exclusively to rural housing. Gathered in the ballroom of the Hotel William Penn, several hundred housing officials from all parts of the country heard Federal administrators and experts discuss various phases of the rural housing problem.

Dr. W. W. Alexander

The Administrator of the Farm Security Administration addressed the meeting as follows: "I think perhaps there may be some significance in the fact that the first formal session of this conference is concerned with Rural Housing.

"I think most of the people don't realize the poverty of our farm population. Rural housing is for people least able to express the need for housing and least able to support housing. I think the experience of the last 2 years has convinced us that the hous-

ing movement for its own success, perhaps for the success of its continued existence, must quickly find some way by which to begin to meet the rural housing situation."

Dr. Louise Stanley

Dr. Louise Stanley, Chief of the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, was the next speaker.

In her discussion of farm housing, she made extensive use of the data from the Farm-Housing Survey of 1934, the farm part of the Consumer Purchases Study, carried on by the Bureau of Home Economics in cooperation with the National Resources Board, and also referred to special data on farm homes in sub-marginal areas, collected by the Farm Security Administration.

In farm areas, Dr. Stanley pointed out, you do not buy or rent a home, but a farm. The house goes with the land. The kind of house the farm will support depends upon

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Miss Barbara Rosien, Assistant Secretary of the Los Angeles housing authority, views the Allegheny County Housing Authority exhibit at annual NAHO meeting in Pittsburgh.

the fertility of that land and the farm income. The farmhouse must be large enough to take care of the full family cycle—from one generation to another. It is advisable, therefore, for farm homes to have at least three bedrooms.

Farm owners in general have better housing than tenants. This varies with conditions of tenancy and length of tenure. Farm operators have better housing than croppers, croppers better than farm laborers.

Facilities are much more difficult to obtain in rural housing than they are in either village or city housing. An indoor water supply depends on income, availability of water, and an accessible supply of electricity. Of the various facilities, electricity varies the least with income, as it is almost wholly dependent upon accessibility of power lines.

Consumer Purchases Study

Dr. Stanley exhibited several charts and maps prepared from data collected in the Consumer Purchases Study. (The charts and figures will be published in forthcoming reports of the Bureau of Home Economics.) She called attention to the following facts: Of the median income groups in various areas, an indoor water supply served more than nine-tenths of the group in Vermont, New Jersey, and California; four-fifths of the group in Oregon—Washington had an indoor water supply; three-fourths in Pennsylvania—Ohio and Michigan—Wisconsin; one-half in Illinois—Iowa and North Dakota—Kansas; one-third in South Dakota—Montana—Colorado; one-sixth in the Carolinas and one-sixteenth in Georgia—Mississippi.

It was found in the course of the Study that plumbing facilities varied more from one community to another than from one income group to another.

For a picture of rural slums, data were obtained from a study made by the Farm Security Administration of 50 sub-marginal families in 11 counties in 9 States. Four counties reported that from 25 to 68 percent of the homes studied had no toilets whatsoever; 15 percent had sanitary outdoor toilets. The most usual source of water was a spring or an open well—only 6.4 percent of these springs or wells were properly enclosed; 93.2 percent of the families use kerosene lamps; 3.1 percent had electricity.

\$300 a Year Cash Income

At the conclusion of Dr. Stanley's speech, Dr. Alexander said that 1,800,000 farm families have gross incomes of less than \$500 per year, according to Bureau of Agricultural Economics data. Since this amount includes what they pay for taxes, fertilizer, and seed required on the farm, their cash income is probably less than \$300 per year.

Major John O. Walker

Major John O. Walker, Director of the Resettlement Division of the Farm Security Administration, was the next speaker on the program. After sketching briefly Farm Security Administration's experience with Rural Housing, Major Walker said that there are certain discoveries made thus far which are worthy of note. (1) Families respond exceedingly well to the improved standards of living made possible in new homes. (2) Projects built to attract industry should be located near good farm land

Managers' Division Meeting

The First Annual Meeting of the Managers' Division, held in Pittsburgh on the two days prior to NAHO's Eighth Annual Meeting, will be fully reported in the next issue of PUBLIC HOUSING (No. 43), as will the round-table discussions held on May 16.

in case an agricultural expansion should prove desirable; they should also be near adequate transportation lines. Location is, therefore, much more important than the price of land.

It is desirable to create some local organization, either an association or a cooperative board, for the purpose of handling the project. Projects resulting in a cooperative relation are producing a high standard of living, a more intelligent and understanding citizenry, and children will grow up to be an asset far in excess of the actual cost of the developments.

Leon H. Keyserling

Leon H. Keyserling, Deputy Administrator and General Counsel of the USHA, the third speaker at the morning session, after mentioning the tremendous need for rural housing, said that a widespread housing program brings an alliance of capital, labor, and materials toward the end of economic advancement.

In addition, the urban housing program needs to be joined by the rural program because (1) a combination of the two would help to cut construction costs. In rural housing there are no building codes, no pattern of city life to which we must conform. Experimentation is, therefore, more feasible, and we may hope that lowered costs will result. (2) The rural program will have more to contribute than the urban program toward cutting down subsidies by lower costs and greater tenant maintenance. (3) The development of the individual house fits into the general thinking of the average American better than group dwellings. (4) The rural program offers the prospect of increasing the role of home ownership in connection with the public housing program.

Jesse Epstein

A paper ("Housing Migrant Agricultural Labor") prepared by Jesse Epstein, Executive Director of the Housing Authority of the City of Seattle, was read before the conference by Ellis Ash, Assistant Director of the Seattle authority. A condensation of this paper follows.

Today the average American citizen knows that there is such a thing as a wandering army of homeless, part-time jobless Americans, seeking food, shelter, and economic security. Before the migratory labor problem can be coped with, a complete understanding of the causes of migrancy, as well as its nature, must be reached.

With the coming of the drought to the Middle West, combined with the cumulative effects of agricultural mechanization in all parts of the Nation except the southeastern States, the numbers of migratory workers increased by leaps and bounds—the national total is now estimated at over a million, half of them in California.

No single factor is more responsible for today's migrancy than the increasing mechanization of our farms—tractors, trucks, pickers, combines, cultivators, graders, shellers, listers, and harvesters. Handling a larger acreage than manpower economically could, they are obviating the need for men.

While the mechanization of farms in the East and Middle West is prying farmers loose from their homes, increasing mechanization in the western areas to which these farmers flee is fast lowering the number of migratory workers needed year by year, crop by crop. Even now, not more than one-half of all the migratory families in the Nation are able to find work.

Three Types of Housing Needed

Any program for housing our transient thousands therefore must provide housing of three types. First, housing of a semi-temporary nature, to care for the immediate needs of part-time seasonal workers in any given locality, and second, housing elsewhere, perhaps, for these same workers during that part of the year in which they are not employed. Such housing would at present be needed for a maximum of some 500,000 persons.

Third, as for housing the other 500,000 or more transients, we must consider that they cannot be classed as migratory workers just because they are migratory and would like to work. These people must be absorbed, somehow, into the national economy. Until a program is evolved specifically to aid this now apparently unneeded group, they must be cared for somehow. The problem of this group is as important to the well-being of the Nation as is the problem of housing the numbers of migrant workers upon whom a type of agriculture depends.

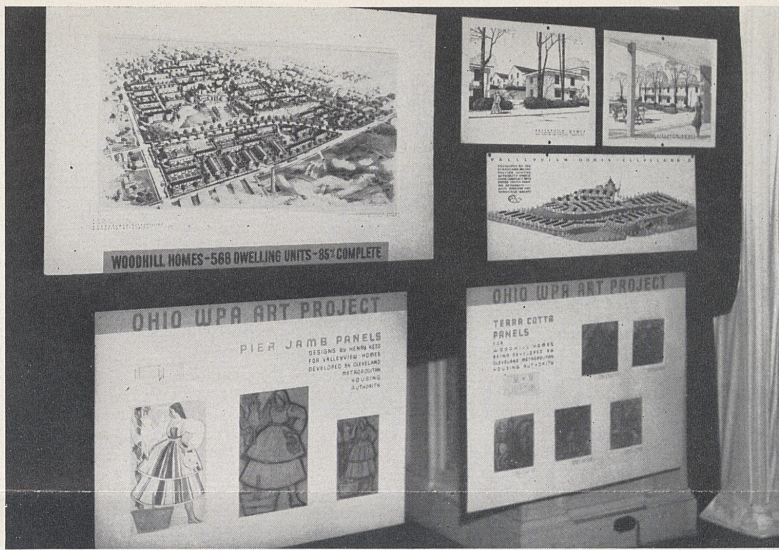
Living Conditions of Migrants

That the need for housing is present throughout the Nation can be seen in a momentary review of the conditions under which the migrants live. We find the migrant workers in the cranberry bogs of New Jersey in housing consisting of crude barracks, designed to house from 10 to 30 families, without bathing or laundry facilities. Down in Florida we find typical housing for migrants to consist of a 14-room shelter, each room containing a family numbering from 2 to 10 people. For each 4 to 8 such shelters, the common practice is to have a single open-pit toilet. The agricultural communities of Texas, during the harvest season, become "open camps" with a huge fluctuating migrant population deprived of facilities for washing, bathing, or cooking. In Arizona we find housing for cotton pickers to consist of deserted chicken sheds and barns. Eight or ten families were found in one barn, with rough rag partitions for privacy, and sleeping on the bare dirt floor.

In Arkansas and Kentucky, we can see strawberry-picking families living in tents which are frequently improvisations of sticks and canvas. Other families sleep in their "jalopies" or trailers, or out under the trees. Camps in Washington State are notably without water facilities, which means no bathing, no washing, no toilets, and drinking water at 5 cents a bucket, prepaid.

Whether employer housing can be a reality prior to the stabilization of the now chaotic migratory labor situation, depends upon the

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The Cleveland exhibit at NAHO's annual meeting featured cooperative work by the Ohio WPA Art Project.

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willingness of employers, as well as upon their financial ability.

There has been little State action in housing migrant workers, although large-scale intensive agricultural economy depends upon a supply of migratory labor for its existence. Only the Federal Government, through the Farm Security Administration, has taken any measurable steps toward the housing of migratory workers. A camp program begun in 1935 has now spread to seven States—Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Arizona, Texas, and Florida. Eventually it is planned that these camps, together with FSA's homestead projects, will care for some 21,000 families at any given time. In constructing these camps, FSA hopes to provide at least temporary housing, sanitary, medical, and social facilities for a fraction of the migrants. This is the emergency aspect of the program. Eventually FSA hopes, through grouping of workers, and through placing of representatives of the Farm Placement Service in each camp, to be able to guide farm worker migration.

All that we know of the housing of migrant agricultural workers is that a beginning has been made. We are seeing the fifth year of an emergency program, a program that is trying desperately to meet the needs of a veritable army of persons, although at the same time never able to reach more than a fraction of those in immediate need. Here it is comparable to urban and rural rehousing. But here, likewise, the resemblance ends. The housing of migratory workers is not rural housing; it is not urban housing. It is an agricultural-industrial problem. The further problem of housing those migrants not needed in that type of intensive agriculture which now has a more than adequate labor supply is a problem of rehabilitation and of industrial and agricultural absorption, in which housing plays a part no greater than in any urban or rural economy.

Community Relations Discussed At Meeting

The Community Relations Committee report was presented and discussed at one of the two afternoon meetings on May 15.

The community relations field was defined as including facilities, services, and activities having to do with recreation, education, and general welfare of the community, both inside and outside the housing project but exclusive of individual, private family activities. Such programs are primarily concerned with *inter-group* and *inter-neighborhood* relations. The report by the NAHO Committee on Community Relations in housing projects emphasized the following points: (1) There is need of early planning of social and recreation space and facilities. (2) The authority should secure advice from those in the community responsible for education, recreation, and community life. (3) Modern housing should be more than good shelter, but provision of good shelter should be the primary purpose. (4) Community activities should be developed by the tenants themselves with the encouragement and advice of management.

In the discussion it was stated that: (1) A housing authority cannot undertake the responsibility for the solution of a common problem for its tenants beyond the solution for the city in general. (2) Housing authorities should not undertake to staff a recreation center. They are not empowered by law, nor would it be wise for them to take over such a service. If they did, confusion would eventually result, with the Department of Recreation (or other agencies) caring for certain recreation services and the housing authority for others.

During the panel discussion on Housing and Welfare, it was recognized that the ultimate aim of both housing and welfare is the rehabilitation of families.

23 Exhibits Feature Pittsburgh Meeting

More than 20 local housing authorities and associations had interesting and instructive exhibits on display at the recent NAHO conference in Pittsburgh. A complete list of the housing authorities and their exhibits follows:

Peoria, Ill.—Renderings and pictures.

Kern County Department of Public Health, Bakersfield, Calif.—A series of pictures showing what had been done to eliminate health hazards growing out of squatters' camps. Pictures were also used to illustrate principal health hazards such as questionable water supply, inadequate waste disposal, and exposure.

Hammond, Ind.—Two architects' drawings.

Akron, Ohio.—Pencil sketches of play areas and the entire project.

New York City.—On an orange and blue background were mounted pictures of First Houses, Harlem River Houses, maps of rebuilt areas, Queensbridge, and Red Hook. Three additional projects yet to be built were also displayed.

Portsmouth, Ohio.—NYA table model.

Detroit, Mich.—Two large colored drawings and a series of site plans.

Cleveland, Ohio.—Photographs of 3 PWA projects super-imposed on a large-scale map of the city. Large drawings of Wood Hills Homes, and Valley View Homes.

Corpus Christi, Tex.—Interior "before" and "after" pictures, and a diagram of "advantages of super-block planning."

Thomas County, Ga.—Two table models, one of dilapidated rural housing; the other of a new USHA-aided rural home (see illustration in PUBLIC HOUSING, No. 33).

Boston, Mass.—Eighteen pictures of slums, construction, and finished projects. Charts, graphs, statistics of rentals, family size and income, construction views.

Knoxville, Tenn.—Interior views and renderings.

Omaha, Nebr.—Display of news clippings.

Jacksonville, Fla.—Stills from the movie, "Housing in Our Time," were displayed on a panel back of a table model of the project.

Philadelphia, Pa.—Six pictures of activities, the project, and a slum were mounted on a large aerial view of Philadelphia.

Toledo, Ohio.—Colorful charts and graphs illustrated by photographs were mounted on 16 large placards.

Houston, Tex.—Progress photographs and montage of the slums.

Allegheny County, Pa.—A large table model of McKees Rocks Terrace.

Atlantic City, N. J.—Pictures of Stanley S. Holmes Village.

Cairo, Ill.—A model of a proposed rural house.

Pittsburgh, Pa. (housing authority).—A series of wall panels showing many phases of Pittsburgh's program, with a large table model of the Terrace Village projects and small table models of apartments.

Vincennes, Ind.—A table model.

Pittsburgh, Pa. (housing association).—Housing drawings by boys and girls from Pittsburgh's schools, grades 5 to 8.

Carmody, Hayes Speak At NAHO Conference

On the second day of the conference, James Hayes, Special Assistant to the Attorney General and one of the keymen in the Nation-wide anti-trust crusade in the building industry, declared that restraints in the building industry are more widespread and varied than anyone imagined before the current Federal investigation started. In most large communities, price-fixing arrangements seem to involve practically every group connected with the construction industry.

The speech, which was "off the record," was highlighted with numerous anonymous illustrations of cases now in the Attorney General's files.

The conference was climaxed by a banquet, at which Federal Works Administrator John M. Carmody was the principal speaker. Mr. Carmody said that "adequate housing for the entire population is an important factor in 'preparedness'. All Americans must enjoy the necessities of life if this country is to be fortified with 'national toughness'."

"We must meet the problems of providing adequate housing, health, education, and other needs to all our people if we are to demonstrate the energy the term 'preparedness' implies."

Housing, Health Discussed At Joplin, Mo., Conference

Through the efforts of Miss Frances Perkins, Secretary of Labor, 300 representatives of Federal, State, and municipal agencies recently met in Joplin, Mo., to study health and housing problems in the tri-State zinc and lead mining area of Missouri, Kansas, and Oklahoma.

Secretary Perkins issued invitations to the Conference, which the U. S. Department of Labor officially sponsored, in the hope that a comprehensive analysis and discussion of problems might lead to the development of a coordinated program.

The tri-State area, about 30 miles in diameter centering around Joplin, is mining country. The communities are composed largely of jerry-built shacks, housing the miners and their families. Silicosis, contracted by the miners, rapidly develops into tuberculosis which is spread and nourished by the flimsy, crowded houses in which the miners and their families are forced to live. The people are practically 100 percent hillfolk from the nearby Ozarks.

Cut In Subsidy Costs Approved In Discussion At NAHO Meeting

Subsidy reductions and R. M. and R. costs were thoroughly discussed at a well-attended session of NAHO's Eighth Annual Meeting on the afternoon of May 15. The session was presided over by Mr. Jacob Crane, Assistant Administrator, USHA. Speakers were Warren J. Vinton, Chief Economist and Planning Officer, USHA; O. A. Corzilius, Executive Director, Columbus Metropolitan Housing Authority; and M. L. Murray, Engineer, Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles; Leon H. Keyserling, Deputy Administrator of USHA, summarized the discussion.

Reporter for the session was Philip M. Klutznick, Assistant Director, Housing Authority of the City of Omaha. Extracts from Mr. Klutznick's report follow:

"It was uniformly agreed on the part of all speakers and virtually all participants in the discussion that ensued that every reasonable effort should be made by both the United States Housing Authority and the local authorities to reduce the cost of housing to the public treasury.

"Mr. Vinton . . . proceeded to illustrate the manner in which he believed future reductions might be accomplished. . . . Insofar as debt service is concerned . . . every effort is being made to improve the attractiveness of local authority securities, with the inevitable result that, given a normal market, money rates would have a tendency to be reduced.

"Mr. Corzilius presented an analysis of Poindexter Village project, of Columbus, Ohio, which disclosed a need for a near maximum subsidy if the project were to avoid financial difficulty.

"Mr. Murray stated that the question as to whether or not this rent level should be established in excess of the lowest possible level obtainable by application of a maximum subsidy is a matter of policy and not a matter of mathematics.

"Mr. Keyserling made it clear that the first step is to determine the needs of the local market and to establish a rental which the local authority, in conference with the USHA, determines to be the rent that should be applied to the existing market. Thereafter a budget is determined upon and the amount of subsidy computed.

"Mr. Crane stated that the future of the public housing program, which is so essen-

tial to our democracy, rests in a large measure on our joint ability to produce lower subsidy costs.

". . . it would appear to be the better part of wisdom to accept the validity of Mr. Crane's challenge . . . it would appear equally valid to accept the recommendation to service a typical cross-section of the lowest family income group, since all are in undeniable need of housing, rather than to attempt to service the lowest possible level obtainable by the application of the maximum subsidy.

"Finally, it seems the better part of wisdom for local authorities to approach a consideration of this subject without the desire to build maximum reserves for impregnable security against the potentiality of illusory future hazards; rather should we expect reasonable safeguard and reasonable reserves, with a flexible and elastic policy that will make possible ready adjustment as needed."

Knoxville High School Gives Housing Pageant

Public housing as a theme for popular folk drama is being utilized by the Austin High School for Negroes in Knoxville, Tenn., where, as the main feature of the commencement exercises this week, students are presenting the pageant, "Better Housing—Better Living." The pageant has a cast of 200 characters, a speaking chorus of 100 voices, a singing chorus of 50 voices, and a musical score written especially for the occasion.

The local housing authority did not take part in the preparation of the manuscript, but, when informed of the proposed pageant, immediately pledged complete cooperation.

Charles E. V. Prins, recently appointed Director of the USHA Informational Service Division, has left for an extended field trip. Mr. Prins will visit projects in every section of the country during the tour, which is expected to consume from 4 to 5 weeks.

Schedule of Bid Opening Dates¹

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Biloxi (Miss.-5-3).....	102	6-18-40
Brunswick (Ga.-9-1).....	128	6- 4-40
Brunswick (Ga.-9-2).....	144	6- 4-40
Dayton (Ohio-5-1-R).....	604	5-28-40
Fall River (Mass.-6-2).....	222	6- 5-40
Houston (Tex.-5-2).....	333	6-20-40
Martinsburg (W. Va.-6-1).....	48	6-20-40
Martinsburg (W. Va.-6-2).....	52	6-20-40
Phoenix (Ariz.-1-3).....	135	6- 3-40
Puerto Rico H. A. (P. R.-3-1).....	210	5-28-40
San Antonio (Tex.-6-4).....	236	6-20-40

¹ There is usually a 30-day period between bid advertising and bid opening.

Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended May 17, 1940	Week ended May 10, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction ¹	209	205	+ 1.95
Number of dwellings under construction ¹	80,882	79,784	+ 1.38
Total estimated over-all cost ² of new housing.....	\$358,756,000	\$354,067,000	+ 1.32
Average over-all cost ² of new housing per unit.....	\$4,436	\$4,438	- 0.05
Average net construction cost ³ per unit.....	\$2,773	\$2,775	- 0.07

¹ Including projects which have been completed.

² Includes: (a) Building the house, including structural costs and plumbing, heating, and electrical installation; (b) dwelling equipment, architects' fees, local administrative expenses, financial charges during construction, and contingency expenses; (c) land for present development; (d) nondwelling facilities.

³ The cost of building the house, including structural, plumbing, heating, and electrical costs.

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