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Fact Sheet Concerning Fair Housing Practices Legislation

Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law in Rhode Island

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FACT SHEET
CONCERNING
FAIR HOUSING PRACTICES LEGISLATION

New York City has had such a law for a year and a half with no untoward consequences.

Emphasis of the City law has been upon conciliation rather than upon punitive enforcement. Thusfar, there has not been need for single instance of punitive enforcement.

Without fair housing practices legislation, continued enforced segregation in housing plays into the hands of unscrupulous real estate operators and speculators who seek to "crack" all-white communities and then resort to scare tactics to create panic-selling to the disadvantage of those who sell as well as to those who buy.

Continued segregated housing creates tensions among citizens and forces certain groups to live in over-crowded, unhealthful and unsafe housing - even if they can afford better housing. It costs the taxpayer huge sums of money to provide the extra services needed to cope with the evils growing out of these conditions.

One and two family houses are not included within the coverage of the proposed legislation unless built in developments of 10 or more houses. Certain housing owned or operated by religious and other institutions are exempted also. Rooms sublet by a tenant are exempted.

Under the proposed legislation, just as under the City law, no landlord is required to relax his standards as to character, income, family composition, credit rating or other qualifying requirements. The landlord is simply required to apply the same standards to every applicant without regard for the applicant's race, religion or national origin.

Legislation concerning the use of one's property is not new. There has been a federal law on the books since 1866 which reads as follows:

"All citizens of the United States shall have the same right in every state and territory, as is enjoyed by the white citizens thereof, to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold and convey real and personal property". (4U.S.C. 42)

The Roman Catholic Bishops of the United States speaking on November 14, 1958 on "Discrimination and the Christian Conscience" stated that enforced segregation cannot be reconciled with the Christian view of our fellowman. They called upon all responsible and soberminded Americans to seize the mantle of leadership from the agitator and the racist and to act decisively now.

In his testimony before the President's Commission on Civil Rights Most Rev. Albert Gregory Meyer, Archbishop of Chicago said:....."We ought to concentrate and insist on the not inconsiderable accomplishments that could be ours now.

This, it seems, is the case with residential integration. The Negro middle classes ought to have the choice of leaving the ethnic community if they so wish, nor is it rash on my part to suggest the time has come for practical measures to that end."