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American housing: some of its problems and opportunities

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AMERICAN HOUSING:
SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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AMERICAN HOUSING:
SOME OF ITS PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

Over three centuries have passed since the white man first arrived in America and found the primitive homes of the Indian, which were built primarily for shelter and protection. Then as well as now the pattern of the home was influenced by geographical environment and material available for construction.

The houses of the New England Indians were often occupied by two families. Because of the danger of Iroquois raids the New England Indians often surrounded their villages with palisades ten to twelve feet high made of logs. Their houses, usually round, consisted of a framework of poles over which were laid mats and coverings of deerskin. Some of the New England Indians (Penobscots) covered their framework of poles with bark. These Indians also built some square lodges of layers of logs three to four feet in height, the crevices caulked with moss and the walls banked with moss and leaves. The top of these lodges was wigwam in style.

The Iroquois (New York Indians) used a long house which accommodated many families. The house frame of these long houses was made of a set of vertical logs with forked tops, from which extended flexible poles lashed
together to form the barrel shape or a gable roof without a ridgepole. This framework was covered with bark shingles. These houses had no windows but at either end were doors of bark boards with wooden hinges or of skins. Through these houses there was a central passage along which was a series of fire pits, each for the use of the families who lived directly opposite each other. "Anyone who has ever lived in a modern apartment house with its disturbances and vexations due to close proximity with one's neighbors must admire the tolerance and decency which must have been possessed by the Iroquois."¹

Indian dwellings on the plains were Tipis, houses which could be easily moved. The wigwam often incorrectly associated with New England Indians was found in the tipi form on the plains. It consisted of a skeleton formation of three or four poles over which was stretched the skins.

"The Mandans, who usually dwelt on bluffs facing the Missouri, built their houses of earth."¹

The Pueblo Indians of the Southwest used a form of construction which comes nearest to apartment house construction of anything found in primitive society. These pueblos were built of adobe brick, cobble stone, and adobe mortar, and later sandstone and adobe mortar. Some of these pueblos were very large. For example, Pueblo Bonito contains no less than 640 rooms. These apartments are strictly

¹ Bemis and Burchard: The Evolving House - Vol. I.
co-operative. Within each pueblo are spaces for storage of supplies in case of siege. (See illustration below.)

Hopi Indian House
Grand Canyon, Arizona

When these Pueblo Indians were forced to take refuge in cliffs and canyons to protect themselves from warlike intruders from the North, they built their celebrated cliff houses (see illustration on Page 4), which were frequently built of stone in circular form with round towers and a castellated appearance. When the Pueblo Indians left their cliff dwellings and returned to the plain, they again took up the rectangular form of house. This illustration shows plainly how geographic conditions and available materials may influence housing patterns.

In Oregon the Indians were confronted with still
another set of conditions. Because of the large trees which made lumber available, we find that their houses were built of planks. In form they resembled the long houses of the Iroquois but were much larger.

Ancient Indian Cliff Dwellings
Walnut Canyon, near Flagstaff, Arizona

In early Colonial days the nation-builders were too busy attempting to get things started to think about housing. So we find them living in very rude huts and even in caves dug into the hillside. When they did start building they used the materials at hand and quite naturally the construction as far as possible was characteristic of their native lands. Climatic conditions affected their new dwellings as well as the character of the material which was readily available. We find among the early
homes, log cabins in the wooded sections of the country, red sandstone and brick houses in the Dutch colonies, adobe brick in the Southwest - the climatic conditions and available materials always limiting the type of house. The style of house had for its background the architecture of the native land from which the early settlers came - English, Dutch, Spanish.

It was not until fifty years after the first settlements were made that a typically American house was developed. This house was built around the chimney. The house was the center of industry and the whole family participated in the work of the home. These houses were well built, serviceable and essentially beautiful. During these days education was taken seriously; crime was severely punished; social events were simple, consisting of such amusements as dances, husking, spinning and quilting bees.

Towards the end of the Colonial period the beginning of social clubs meeting in the homes of members is found. During this period travel was difficult and houses were built large in order to accommodate visitors who could not return home after finishing their business. The eighteenth century represents a quiet interim between pioneering days and the confusion of rapid growth.

According to Bemis and Burchard the American home may be classified as follows:

1. Period of Consolidation (1783-1820). During this period the houses steadily improved in the modest comforts provided and in the simple straightforward elegance of their classical interiors and exteriors.


3. Period of Standardization (1865-1918).

4. Era of Economic Problems (1918- ... ).
CHAPTER I.

WHAT CONSTITUTES GOOD HOUSING

In tracing the history of housing from the days of the cave dwellers to modern times the gradual emergence of the idea of "the home" as something with a deeper meaning than a mere shelter becomes prominent. A house should not be simply a contrivance for shelter, or a certain number of cubic feet in dimensions, or capable of containing a given number of animals and furnishing them with the needful conveniences for eating and sleeping. It should be the home of human beings; it should be the nursery and abode of all those feelings and sentiments which distinguish the human creature and which are so different from all that belongs to the mere animal.

McDonald says, "Housing is the keystone of Civilization." I do not believe I would go quite that far but rather I would say it is a keystone. Certainly there are others - education, for example. Although the crux of the housing problem may be economic it is not merely this. "Houses are commodities, built and then sold or rented; but, more than that, they are homes of people, and in the home there is the potentiality of many things."

HOUSING PROBLEM

In America we have been conscious of a housing problem for nearly a hundred years. As early as 1834 our

1. Egleston: Villages and Village Life.
2. McDonald: Modern Housing
3. Freemantle: The Housing of the Nation.
high death rate was attributed to bad housing. At first it was only the large cosmopolitan centers which had this housing consciousness. Today people are realizing more and more that good housing is a vital national necessity. Housing constitutes a very considerable factor in human existence since one-third of every person's life is spent in the home. The home influences health and character, life's inspirations and consolations. It plays a great part in individual lives and reflects the character and prosperity of a nation. Homes are our primary schools of social and moral and religious education and furnish the mirror through which we can read the stability or instability of our social background. In order that the home may fulfill all these duties, it is surely desirable that it be properly housed.

We talk continually about the desirability of a "normal life" but a normal life can not exist apart from a normal home. So it would seem that our housing problem is to create normal homes. The housing problem involves "not only the unfit dwellings but also the occupants of those dwellings; not only the construction and management but also housekeeping and standards of living." 1

To be sure it is difficult to decide what makes a normal house, what makes a bad house or what makes a good house. Intelligence, sympathetic understanding,

1. Article on What is Housing? What Methods are Used in Housing Work? Compiled by Massachusetts Housing Association.
unselfishness, industry and love will make a home decent and healthy, however humble and simple it may be. Not all the bathtubs and radios in the world will make decent a home that is ruled by the love of pleasure, selfishness and animosity. It would be difficult to establish a minimum standard of love, industry, unselfishness, etc. that would be required for a normal home but it is within the range of possibility for every country to firmly establish a minimum standard of housing. By minimum standard I mean a minimum health-and-decency standard which should be obtainable by every self-supporting family, rich or poor, large or small, white or black, American born or foreign born, throughout our land. Such a standard should be used in calculating the amount of relief needed for those who are not self-supporting.

BAD HOUSING

It is difficult to state what goes to make up a "bad" house. However, there are certain physical characteristics which will be found in those houses which are termed "bad".

The chief defects in the housing conditions that prevail through all parts of America are:

1. Lack of light, particularly sunlight
2. Inadequate ventilation
3. Overcrowding
4. Unsanitary conditions
5. Lack of safety in case of fire
6. Poor planning

Bad housing constitutes a difficult environment that makes great demands on the physical and psychic vitality of the people compelled to live in such surroundings. From the beginning a child poorly housed lacks the advantages of a normal home. How can an expectant mother living in an overcrowded home, for instance, have the physical rest and mental calmness that are necessary for normal pre-natal influence? How can she pass on the best physical inheritance if she enjoys little sunshine and pure air? And yet we expect these children to develop normally and to become normal adults!

We expect plants and animals to thrive only if given plenty of sunlight and fresh, pure air. Can we expect more of human beings? Are not they as important? It has been said that there are spots in this country where God will not even make grass to grow, but we expect human beings to live there. Many houses are built so closely together that sunlight can not possibly reach into the rooms; houses with rooms having but a window apiece where it is utterly impossible to get any circulation of air. Many of these houses are unsanitary since they have impure and inadequate water supply; a decided lack of bathing
facilities; insufficient toilets; lack of sewer connection, inadequate disposal of refuse, and lack of screens against flies and mosquitoes. Many homes are badly planned and lack safety in case of fire. There is often but one exit, where there should be at least two. And many times investigation would show that there are many fire pockets.

When we consider the effects of overcrowding upon the different personalities involved in such a condition; when we realize that sunlight and ventilation are necessary for healthy tissue building and normal body functioning, and that every child must have a feeling of physical, social, and emotional security in order to develop normally, we can easily believe the statistician when he tells us that a badly housed community furnishes a fertile soil in which to nourish seeds of crime. It has been proven that "bad housing" is a factor in disease, immorality, crime and vocational inefficiency. Bad housing therefore, is a drain upon the community, increasing the caseload of social agencies, the burden upon police and courts, and decreasing the efficiency of industries. Improvement in housing means not only a saving in present expenditures, but a positive gain through transforming present human liabilities into assets.

But we may say, there is nothing we can do about it at the present time. We are in a depression period and
we can not afford to spend money just now to better housing conditions. I merely wish to ask one question - Is it less expensive to do nothing about these conditions and let our money go to fight disease, without ever getting at a source of the trouble; to wage war against crime, immorality and delinquency without attacking a cause? Is this less expensive than to check one of the sources from which these conditions spring? Please note I say "one of the sources". I do not intend to convey the idea that bad housing is the sole cause of such conditions and that if housing conditions are bettered, crime, disease, immorality and delinquency will be abolished. Dr. Edith E. Wood says that "some day America will inevitably awake to the cost of bad housing. The wanton wastefulness of it will trouble the American sense of efficiency."

GOOD HOUSING

But let us turn our attention from the so-called "bad" house to the "good" house. Here, again, I shall refer first to the physical characteristics which, almost without fail, are found in the good house. In good housing

1. The home surroundings will be healthful

2. The home itself will be relatively safe and sanitary

3. There will be adequate sunlight and ventilation

1. Wood: Recent Trends in American Housing
4. There will be privacy and rooms of sufficient size and number to house decently the members of the family

These items seem to be practically the reverse of what we find in the bad home. John J. Clarke has set forth the following as the minimum housing conditions which should exist:

1. A sanitary house should be weather-proof, should provide complete shelter from heat and cold.
2. It should be well and soundly built, on a site clean and properly drained, of sufficient superficial area.
3. Means should be taken to prevent dampness arising from the soil.
4. It should be constructed of suitable building material, durable, impervious to weather and reasonably fire-proof.
5. Each room of the house should be of sufficient height and cubic capacity, with proper means of ventilation and lighting. All living rooms, and some of the bed rooms, should have some provision for artificial heating.
6. An adequate and wholesome water supply - hot and cold - for all purposes should be available for each house.
7. There should be suitable, sufficient and separate sanitary accommodations, and properly constructed drainage should be provided.
"8. Provision should be made for the prompt and effectual removal of refuse."¹

To these I should add

a. Architectural lines should make some appeal to the aesthetic taste.
b. The arrangement of rooms should be convenient.

Mr. Clarke has confined his standards to the house itself but let us now consider the home in its setting. Surroundings hold a very important relationship to the house itself. Mrs. Mary Kingsbury Simkhovitch has said, "Good housing should include gardens and playgrounds. Home should be so attractive that the child prefers it to the streets. The whole neighborhood, indeed, must stand the test: Is it a fit place to bring up children?"²

In the immediate surroundings what are the things to which we should give our attention when choosing a good house? I believe we should think of the following: Sanitation - I am sure we would want to feel that the neighborhood was free from sources of infection, such as breeding spots for insects that are germ carriers; free from noxious gases, such as chemical works; free from clutter, refuse, etc. i.e. streets and property kept clean.

Safety - Especially with children in the family it would be desirable not to be too close to main traffic arteries, and if it were necessary for children to cross such streets to

¹. Clarke: The Housing Problem.
². Article by Dorothy Thomas on Crime Prevention in Our Job.
get to school, to the playground, to the stores, there should be very definite protective traffic regulations enforced at such crossings. The streets should be properly lighted at night. There should be adequate fire and police protection for the district.

Morality - In these days of changing values when young people are finding it more and more difficult to make the right choices, it would be most desirable to be away from unnecessary temptations. Therefore, I am sure we would not wish to locate near houses of prostitution, gambling dens, modern "taverns" or bar rooms, and pool rooms. We would want to feel that the recreational and amusement centers in the neighborhood could and would give the desirable sort of influence - a healthful influence, morally, socially and spiritually.

Aesthetic Elements - I sometimes think that not enough attention is paid to this feature. And yet when we stop to think about it I believe practically everyone would say, yes, of course it is desirable to locate in a section where interest is taken in preserving the picturesque, where street advertising is not allowed, where pride is taken in the grounds about the houses. Former President Hoover has said, "Beauty is a commercial asset to the home builder, because it is a spiritual necessity to the home owner".

But again I wish to emphasize the fact that no matter how perfect the physical conditions of the home and surroundings may be, it will not be a good home unless within the home you find love, sympathetic understanding, co-operation and toleration.

In 1923 the following Bill of Rights was drawn up by the International Save the Children Fund. After some revision it was endorsed in 1924 by the Assembly of the League of Nations. The original English draft reads:

"Irrespective of race or class, politics or creed, every child should: First, be born in health and honour, and nurtured under healthful conditions. Second, every child should be preserved in health and succoured in sickness and distress, rescued when in error. Third, every child should have opportunity for physical, mental and moral and spiritual development. Fourth, every child should be brought up as a member of the human family, conscious of its kinship with all other children and prepared to play its part in the service of its fellows."¹ This Bill of Rights should become as epochal as the historical document that inspired its name. It should insure to children of the future their rights and privileges as firmly as the original declaration brought security to the English people. The kingdom of the home should exist for the child and that kingdom should be on a high physical, moral and

¹. Article by Florence Brown Sherbon on The Contribution of the Home to the Preparation of the Child for Life.
spiritual level.

The home is where the child gains his first impressions and where his development is primarily determined. "The home . . should not be an end in itself but a means to the fulfillment of high ideals, of happiness, of family life. Each member of every family should have opportunity at all times to maintain sound health, develop his personal capacities and grow in character."\(^1\)

It is to the home that we look for assistance in correcting many of the difficulties which face us at the present time. Notice I say "assistance" in solving some of our present difficulties. John R. H. McDonald says, "Houses that provide the maximum facilities for the development and maintenance of the sound physical and mental condition of our people are the solution not only of the housing problem, but of the public health problem, the problem of the care of mental defectives, the problem of traffic congestion of the streets by those unfortunates who find the streets less dismal than their present homes, the problem of crime and unrest, indeed all the social problems that beset us today."\(^2\) However, I do not believe good housing would be the complete solution of our problems. The depression has shown us that our social problems are often affected by economics. In fact we have come to realize that all of our problems seem to be interwoven.

2. McDonald: Modern Housing.
HOUSING AND HEALTH

Before taking up "housing and health" I want to discuss for a moment what is meant by health. According to the dictionary health means "the state of being hale, sound or whole, in body, mind or soul". It comes from the same root as do both hale and heal, which means to make whole. Therefore, today, when we speak of health, I believe it means physical, mental, social and emotional balance. To be healthy means to have a healthy body, a healthy mind, a healthy attitude, healthy habits and healthy emotions.

I am sure everyone will agree that housing holds a definite relation to health in its very broadest sense. It would be most difficult to separate the factors of crowding, personal habits, diet, poverty, and other hygienic and sanitary influences from the actual housing conditions. "Healthy housing is the fundamental necessity for the physical and mental welfare of our people, while bad and unhealthy housing conditions are not only the worst of all social evils in themselves, but also the direct cause of many others."¹

First, let us consider physical health and housing. "More persons than rooms in a household create a condition of crowding."² If there is overcrowding, of course there is lack of sufficient fresh air per person.

¹. McDonald; Modern Housing.
². The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
There should be 600 cubic feet per person. In addition to lack of sufficient air there may be much smoke, gas, dust, and odors to make the little air which is available impure. Tuberculosis is a disease about which in recent years much has been written. Although there has never been shown to be any direct relationship between housing and tuberculosis, nevertheless housing may be of some importance in its prevention and in its cure. The spread of such diseases as typhoid fever is facilitated where there is inadequate or impure water supply, where there is faulty disposal of sewage, where there are unsanitary conditions in general. Although there are many factors involved in infant mortality, "most studies of this subject conclude that regardless of race stock, the more persons per room and the more families per dwelling, the higher the infant mortality."¹ Many are the problems of physical health which have some bearing upon housing.

Just how can housing affect the mental health? I have already spoken of overcrowding. If this condition exists there undoubtedly will be much noise; there will be no opportunities of privacy; and doubtless there will be conditions which prevent quiet rest. Although these conditions in themselves may not be the direct cause of nervous diseases, they certainly may do damage to the mind, emotions, conduct and personality. Noise itself has a

¹ The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
definite relationship to instability in children. A certain amount of privacy and quietness is necessary. It is essential that there be sufficient rooms in a house that one can occasionally, at least, get away from everybody and be alone for a period. Then, too, the mental attitudes of the family are bound to be passed on to the children. Nervousness and irritability permeate the atmosphere in crowded and inconvenient homes and these attitudes are passed on to the children. Are conditions such that these mental attitudes are wholesome?

What of the social health? Social health is generally the expression of physical, mental and emotional conditions and generally centers around sex. Sex curiosity in young children is only a normal factor in their development and should be treated in a wise and wholesome manner. If conditions are crowded, it seems to me it "makes necessary the exposing of the ordinary physical functions of the individual to the gaze of those about." This in turn leads to laxity of moral standards and a general loosening of those rules of conduct which are necessary social assets.

During recent years, much has been done to advance healthful surroundings for workmen in factories. But to what avail are these conditions if they return home after working hours to spend sixteen or more hours in

1. Aronovici: Housing and the Housing Problem.
unsanitary and unhealthful surroundings? If they try to escape this home condition they go to the streets, hunt up amusement houses and often lose sleep, form questionable friendships and are often led into a life that saps their vitality and renders them incapable vocationally. Although there is no statistical record to show relationship between efficiency and housing conditions, nevertheless, it is the consensus of opinion that good housing conditions improve the workers' physical health and morale, reduce susceptibility to fatigue, and, therefore, in the end increase efficiency and production. Without question "industrial housing is an important problem today and employers are realizing the fact more and more. But if bad housing costs the manufacturer much, it costs the nation more, as all the lost time and expense caused by labor turnover... reduces the productive ability of the nation and checks the increase of national wealth."

Besides disease itself, "general debility, social deterioration, moral and sexual depravity, revolutionary unrest, crime and lunacy are all to a large extent by-products of bad housing conditions."

"The house should be more than a shelter; it should be a home for the family. The family is the sanitary unit of society. The home is the citadel of organized family life, and the family is the basis of public

1. Article by Leslie H. Allen on The Cost and Value of Good Housing to our Industrial Life.
2. McDonald: Modern Housing.
"health. Anything which tends to foster home life and make it comfortable and happy makes for a stable social order and facilitates good health administration. The house is the home of some members of the family for twenty-four hours a day, and for all the members at least eight hours a day. It therefore of a necessity has an effect upon the health of its occupants as well as their efficiency and capacity for service in the world's work."¹

HOUSING AND DELINQUENCY

A study of Mr. McDonald's list of by-products of bad housing forces us to the conclusion that delinquency and bad housing have a very definite relation to each other. "Delinquency refers to conduct. It suggests that the law has been broken; but the tendency of our own day is to consider as delinquent children any whose conduct points toward the probable breaking of law."² The child knows no difference between right and wrong. That is acquired through growth and as a result of social environment acting upon his inborn nature. As a means of preventing delinquency attention should be directed upon those acts of children which will be termed as criminal if they remain when maturity is reached. "Acts of this sort most often found among children of pre-school age are: swearing, temper tantrums, disobedience, assault and battery, destruction, pilfering, sex offenses and lying."³

¹. The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
². Beach: An Introduction to Sociology.
³. Morris: Criminology.
Again I want to emphasize that bad housing is not the cause of delinquency but it surely is a causal factor. We are told that the delinquent children who come before the courts are often from poor home environments or no home environment at all. It is only natural for children to have certain desires and impulses. These should be wisely directed. "The child of today becomes lawless and anti-social, not so much because the rod is spared and he is indulged and pampered as because too often he is expected to find his joy and pleasure and chief occupation in forever adapting himself to the adult activities of a crowded household."1 Occasionally a home rated as good by standardized criteria may be a cause in producing delinquency in a child who is not adjusted to the home.

Play is a necessary part of child life and should be so recognized. The lack of provision for a place to play, time for play, direction in play often means the beginning of delinquency. Children are great imitators and the language and ways of a household very early become their language and their ways.

Delinquency is a matter of adjustment or rather lack of adjustment. And this lack of adjustment is often first found in the home since the "chief social factors influencing the pre-school child are, of course, the contacts within the family circle."2 Without doubt the home broken

1. Article by Florence Brown Sherbon on The Contribution of the Home to the Preparation of the Child for Life.
by death, desertion, divorce, sickness or poverty is less efficient in developing and directing the normal desires and aspirations of childhood than the home in which both parents are working together to control the experience of the children.

"Looking at the problem (of delinquency) as a whole from the subjective or personal side, it will be found that youth goes wrong because of three conditions; the thwarted life, the empty life, the undisciplined life."¹ The natural impulses and desires do not need thwarting but rather they need guiding. The child needs real interests and he needs to develop a life which is steady or disciplined. Where can he gain these things? Primarily in the home since the home is where he will spend his early and perhaps his most formative years. Without question the responsibility of the home for the education and conduct of the child is very great. If the home is handicapped by being badly housed there is little hope that it will be able to surmount the difficult environmental conditions and guide the child properly.

HOUSING AND CITIZENSHIP, RECREATION AND EDUCATION

Mr. McDonald speaks of revolutionary unrest as a by-product of bad housing. Both history and statistics prove, I think, that housing has a distinct effect upon citizenship. "As far back as history has been able to

¹ Beach: An Introduction to Sociology.
trace the slender threads of the origin and growth of civilization one finds chronicled efforts toward the establishment of ideal communities. Dreams of a new order in which crime and poverty, squalor and disease and death would be checked, have inspired thinkers from Aristotle to Wells.\(^1\) The home is the first world into which the child is born. He first becomes a citizen of this unit before he enters into the broader meaning of citizenship. So if we hope to find the children of today becoming desirable citizens of tomorrow, it would seem necessary for the home to give a "certain personal and social relationship from which the higher values of a progressive society emerge."\(^2\) In other words, "Are our homes breeding good and happy citizens, or are they breeding disease, misery, immorality, crime, revolution?"\(^3\) Are we building our nation with qualities that lead to health and decency, or those that bring sickness and indecency? Does our housing make for stable citizens or does it breed an instability which leads to insanity, according to McDonald a by-product of poor housing? "Housing is not only one of the three essentials of life, ranking with food and clothing, but it is one of the best measures of a nation's civilization."\(^4\)

Much is being said about the corrupt political conditions which exist today. Are these conditions not due

1. Aronovici: Housing and the Housing Problem.
2. The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
3. Freemantle: The Housing of the Nation.
to "the gang" which has been allowed to grow up in our cities? We have failed to maintain normal living conditions. "The exodus of the most valuable leadership, due to these unfavorable living conditions in our cities, has made gang politics more influential without the reaction that intelligent and honest leadership would foster... If a reaction does not set in, and we continue this abnormal city development, we shall soon find that the city has become the menace of democracy instead of being its hope and inspiration."¹

When we speak of housing today, I believe we no longer refer merely to the home, but rather to the home in its neighborhood setting and the relation of a man to his neighborhood or community is one of the determining factors of his citizenship. What are the neighborhood conditions about the home? Is provision made for proper recreation for children? As I have stated previously, children need to play. Proper provision should be made for both the playtime of children and the recreation of grown sons and daughters and I might also add, for the leisure time of adults. "If leisure presents the balance to work and the offsetting relaxation to our modern stress, every man and woman should be able to receive from the community recreational opportunities that will maintain the tone of mind and body."² So then, every community needs playgrounds,

¹ Aronovici: Housing and the Housing Problem.
² The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
athletic fields, and recreational centers if it expects to produce good citizens. Contacts made through these means will further the social ends since community approval and disapproval will be developed and will have its part in moulding the character of both young and old.

We may say, why do we need to be concerned with recreation, why not let the school assume that responsibility? In the first place, one is in school only a short period of the day. During that time he is taught certain things but it is in the home and the neighborhood he has to practise those teachings. "The United States has pinned her faith upon her school system and her institutions of high learning. In connection with housing, the question arises: Is a child fully educable whose physical stamina is weakened by the conditions under which he is living or whose character is molded by the mesh of low-toned neighborhood influences known to exist in neglected communities which develop an ethical outlook of their own?" The home, the school, the community, the church, the contacts through association - together all form the complete educational background of the child and each must assume its share of responsibility if we hope to gain a good citizen in the end. In the home the child should be able to study comfortably, undisturbed, with adequate heat and light; he should be able to practise cleanliness and sanitation. In

1. The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
the neighborhood he should be able to take his part and share his responsibility in the larger group activities.

The home and community are not only the training school for making good citizens but they are the means of keeping good citizens. For it is said that if you follow the workman to his home "you will find there the root cause of the discontent that keeps him forever on the move, restless and dissatisfied . . . . The man who loves his home will take a pride in his work. He will make a good citizen and help to build up his community."¹ Improve the standard of life within the home, better the environment, and a higher sense of citizenship is bound to follow. Also I believe with these conditions you will find more permanence and stability which in turn are essential in maintaining good homes and good neighborhoods.

"In the neighborhood community, delinquency is lessened, character is strengthened, individual skills are whetted by friendly rivalry, the school is supplemented by cultural groupings, recreational opportunity is more richly provided and the rising generation is afforded a normal apprenticeship in the practices of civic life. Every objective cherished by leaders in social progress is forwarded, in one way or another, when the local community is promoted."²

Then, I believe we can truthfully say that

1. Article by Leslie H. Allen on The Cost and Value of Good Housing to our Industrial Life.
2. The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
housing "is a means of advancing civilization. When the mass of the people, even when any considerable part of the people live in hovels or in crowded, noisome tenements, their nation, their community is held back, its progress checked. If only a small fraction of the population is housed in unfit dwellings, that fraction is a focal point for disease, vice, crime. Getting rid of unfit housing is the surest means of reducing these social handicaps. Note that I do not say the elimination of bad housing will free us from disease, vice and crime. There is no panacea.

The social problem has many phases and each must be dealt with. But housing is a key phase. Deal with it effectively and dealing with the others becomes more productive."

It takes an appreciation of the details of history and a sweep of the imagination to look at one of the many magnificent palaces that we can find in the suburbs of most of our large cities today, and realize that perhaps the American ancestors of the owner of the palace at one time clung to the sides of hills or pitched their tents in valleys for shelter and protection. In allowing our minds to dwell upon this picture we cannot help but ask ourselves the question: Does this great masterpiece of mortar and stone make a better home for its children than did the rude hut cut from the trees of the

forest? With all its elegance of modern convenience are its health conditions superior to the wooden hut? Are the morals of the mansion on a higher plane than those of the meanly built shelter of early days? Does it produce better citizens because of its luxury and leisure? If poorly housed children of crowded districts are exposed to the evils of disease, immorality and crime, then the occupants of the modern mansion must be our best citizens. These and other questions arise at this point and lead us to ask what are the other types of housing existing in America today beside the crowded tenement and what influence, if any, does the type of housing have upon the occupant? Is our housing in America standardized? Is it classified? Does the average American live in an average home, and what and where is the average American home?
CHAPTER II.

HOW WE ARE HOUSED

How many of the American people, especially those who are well housed, ever stop to think of how the other half lives? Very few, I fear. I believe that if the question - How is America housed? - were asked of the average American citizen, the answer would be, although we have our "bad" spots America on the whole is pretty well housed. And yet, "the truth is that less than half the homes in America measure up to minimum standards of health and decency."\(^1\) As a matter of fact even "in normal times more people than we are willing to admit are housed and fed like beasts rather than human beings."\(^2\) In a recent housing survey made by Lynn E. Brown of women students in Normal Schools and Teachers' Colleges in New York State, and I think we will agree that such a group would come from average American homes, it was found that 60\% of the homes from which these students come fall below the Comfort Standard of Living and 40\% below the Minimum Comfort Standard.

RURAL HOMES

It is quite an erroneous idea, too, to think that bad housing is confined to urban and suburban communities. As we drive through New England towns we notice primarily the beauty of the surroundings. With the automobile these farms are brought so near the urban districts that they are

1. The Editors of Fortune: Housing America.
2. Morris: Criminology
hardly more than suburbs. The buildings in these rural sections are well kept up. But contrast these farm houses with those, for instance, in Montana. I wish I might pass on to you the picture these made upon my mind a few years back. If I had not actually seen them I know I would not believe that such conditions could and do exist in America today. Although some of these houses were new, they were most crude, resembling, I should say, the home of the pioneer; others appeared very old probably because the owners had not attempted to keep them in any sort of repair. There is so much open, uncultivated land in this section of the country; cultivation is so difficult, crops often being thin and uncertain, that in many instances people lose their enthusiasm and interest and allow their homes to deteriorate. Many are the homes which give evidence to the fact that the struggle has been too great, so they give up and merely aim for a bare existence.

In between these extremes we have the wide farms of the Middle West where conditions are quite different. Here the land is fertile as well as extensive. Until recently this type of farmer has been prosperous and his home gives evidence of this. Houses are in good repair; conveniences such as farm machinery, telephone and automobile are used quite extensively. Although the Mid-Western farmer may be dependent nowadays on Federal relief, all in
all the standard of living found in this section is much higher than that found further West.

Throughout the country many farm homes lack conveniences. "In a study of white farm families in eleven states made by the Department of Agriculture in 1926 (and I do not believe conditions have changed materially since then) it was indicated that seventy-five percent of the homes had no modern improvements whatever and that only five percent were completely modern. Federal Children's Bureau studies of rural housing in all parts of the United States have shown that an appalling proportion of white as well as negro farm families live in one and two room cabins, often with no sanitary conveniences of even the most primitive kind and sometimes with no glass in the windows."¹

In this consideration of conveniences of rural districts, the following figures taken from a 1930 Census on Farm conditions are of interest:

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<th>Percentage of Farms Equipped with²</th>
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¹. Article on Housing. Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences.  
². The Editors of Fortune: Housing America.
"Authoritative estimates put something up to ninety percent of farm houses, eighty percent of villages homes, and thirty-five percent of town homes beyond the pale for lack of sanitary toilets within the houses, and almost as many for lack of running water."¹

No, bad housing spots are not confined to urban districts, for there are slum farms in every section of the country. And, of course, there are elegant ranches - sometimes found where the poor farm is characteristic. With modern means of travel, especially the automobile, rural people cannot conceal the character of their homes. These homes can be and should be made as beautiful and convenient as city homes.

**URBAN HOMES**

But let us wend our way from the rural districts toward the city. First we come to the small suburban town or city. "On the whole American housing has probably reached its highest development in the varying homes of the suburbs."² Here we find many small single houses, most of them of good appearance, quite a few two-family houses and some smaller apartment houses. In America "the single family dwelling has long been the social ideal ... It is the predominating type in this country and houses fully three-fourths of the population."³ We also find trees, grass, open spaces and quiet. We feel that here there is

1. The Editors of Fortune: Housing America.
plenty of good fresh air. People seem to take an interest and pride in the external appearances of their homes. There are small vegetable and flower gardens. There are places, other than the street, where the children can play.

In this small suburban town we very definitely get the idea that on the whole housing conditions are good. And yet, in 1927 a survey was made of Zanesville, Ohio, which was considered a typical American community, and of sixty-eight percent of homes surveyed about forty percent had no baths and only sixty-one percent had plumbing systems. In a recent survey made in Newton it was disclosed that there are 858 houses without a bathtub. So even though American housing may have reached its highest development in the suburb it is far from an ideal situation.

Now we will go on into the strictly urban town and we find ourselves at once in a center of congestion. On the outskirts of the city are a few single houses, some of them very large and probably the town homes of the wealthy; and some smaller apartment houses with a limited amount of open space. But in the midst of the city there are few open spaces.

"The chief characteristic of urbanism as it affects homes are compactness of the dwelling, and high density of population. Coupled with these are certain advantages, such as quick transportation, resulting in a short
period of travel between home and work; high development of utilities and services; easy access at almost any time to shops, amusements, and the cultural advantages of the city. As disadvantages may be mentioned air polluted by industry and motor exhaust; light filtered through a hazy atmosphere and obstructed by other buildings; noise; lack of proper access to green growing things and mother earth, particularly for the young children of the home; and rather too constant propinquity of one's neighbors. 1

To many of us city housing means apartment housing. But may I call to mind the fact that apartment housing itself has a scale going all the way from the exclusive so-called pent house down to the slum.

The apartment house is nothing new. It "was known in Rome; tenement structures of Europe date back at least to the Middle Ages; many European countries today favor them over the single-family house ... In the past thirty years, however, and especially since the World War, there has been a marked trend in urban and suburban communities toward the multi-family dwelling; in many cities a majority of families provided with new housing has been sheltered in such dwellings." 2

In some of the more expensive apartments there is an effort to resemble the detached house. Of course there is no surrounding lawn but often there are "common facil-

2. Bemis: The Evolving House - Vol. II.
ities for play, natatoria, sun-rooms, roof gardens, billiard rooms. Then, we find the small dinette, kitchenette apartments which offer little in the line of real domesticity. "An effort to supply synthetic nature is now being seriously made in the development of 'garden' apartments. . . . In this type of layout the center of the block, occasionally entirely closed off from the streets and occasionally open at one or both ends is devoted to grass, trees, flowers, and playground." There is also the typical five-room apartment which "but for gardening and recreation - . . . offers all the essentials of contemporary American life." And of course at the lowest end of the scale is the slum which I will discuss later in the chapter.

But "whatever the reasons for living in the city (may be) it is a fact that so far as essential conditions are concerned all of these people live much the same lives. The man who sleeps high above Park Avenue none the less wages a war with dust and dirt, noise and gas which is not different from that of his neighbor in the East Side slum. On a hot day he too must seek refuge in park or summer resort. On going to work he too must become engulfed in a swarm of humans. To be sure, his wealth permits him escapes from the city and in the city which are closed to the poor man. But in the last analysis if he really is a city dweller he pays the same price for living there." 1

What of the slum, that greatest of social evils of every large city and of many smaller cities? I say every large city because each one has its bad slum area. The facts may not be known because "public officials are persuaded that it is unwise to refer to the existence of slums", but they are there just the same. In the first place what is a slum district? Of course the definition of any district depends upon the point of view of the definer. Edith Louise Allen has said a slum is the "tail-end use of a dwelling." The definition of a slum found in Murray's English Dictionary is "a thickly populated neighborhood or district where the homes and conditions of life are of a squalid and wretched character." I think we will all agree that the elements which combine to produce it are overcrowding, lack of light or air, unhealthy physical and social conditions, and obsolete or dangerous construction. I have placed overcrowding first as this is perhaps the best element upon which a statistical approach could be based, and certainly it is one of the most serious aspects of the slum problem.

Originally our slums were made up of the flood of immigrants who poured into our industrial cities. At first they took the cheapest homes available. Up until recently, however, this group has always been moving through such districts, sometimes being pushed up a rung or two of the

1. The Editors of Fortune: Housing America.
ladder to make room as others came. "But now the slum bred are settling down. America seems likely to repeat European experience of a population born and bred in slums, generation after generation, until it becomes what the English call 'slum-minded'. Then this population becomes a real problem."¹

I suppose there will always be some people who will choose the cheapest sort of living quarters, no matter how poor it is, and no matter how expensive it may prove in the long run. "The dregs of mankind remain in the mentally and morally defective, the uninspired weakling and wastrel, those who do not or cannot appreciate the subtler comforts, which to most men are the necessities of modern life; and these converge on the most decayed houses and least delectable districts, men and houses together constituting the slum; sucking down into it a reputation from which both men and houses suffer, and recovery is beyond repair."²

"The slum is the symbol of bad housing; and housing is the essence of social reform, reform that is of society out of its brotherly heart."² In the preceding chapter I spoke about housing and citizenship. Surely the way to nourish citizenship is not the way of the slum.

Let us take a glance at a slum and what do we see? The houses are dingy, badly kept, in need of repair. The

¹. Articles on What is Housing? What Methods are Used in Housing Work? Compiled by Mass. Housing Association.
². Freemantle: The Housing of the Nation.
street is the playground for the children; it is also a

turmoil of noise. Fire escapes often act as the closets for

food supplies; and lines stretched between them are the

only means for drying and airing clothes. The rooms within,

if there are windows, are badly lighted and poorly venti-
lated, and nearly always house more, sometimes many more

than one person. The kitchen often is used for cooking,

eating, washing, bathing, and even sleeping. "Food is

scarce and poor. Clothing reeks of toil. Filth is common,

partially generated by the habits of the people and par-
tially by the fact that there is little incentive to try

and improve interior conditions in view of the mean ex-
teriors."

I think many of us living in the midst of such

conditions would despair of improvement.

As far as I can see the slum has absolutely no

excuse for being. "We have got to learn that henceforth

we no longer can live on the people, that from this time

forward we must live with them. The slum is the most con-
spicuous example of the result of living on the people."

It is certainly not right "that the community should be

exploited for the benefit of slum profiteers."

The greatest appeal to America at the present

time is the economic appeal. Foreign communities have

learned that the slum districts are wasteful. When is

economic America going to wake up to that fact? "How much

2. Article by Richardson Wright on Slums and Waste.
3. Clarke: The Housing Problem.
do our obsolete dwellings cost us yearly in preventable deaths, sickness and crime? The question is asked in a purely economic sense. Human happiness and human misery cannot be weighed in such scales. It is time for us to become "slum conscious"; it is time for us to realize that for economic reasons as well as for humanitarian reasons, we should abolish the slum. By so doing we would improve not only the health, morals and welfare of those living under unwholesome conditions, but the whole community would be benefitted for I have already said that if any district is housed in crowded, noisy tenements, the progress of the entire community is checked and held back. Then, too, consider the economic phases that enter into the picture; real estate values, cost of crime in courts, cost of institutions for criminals, cost of care of mentally delinquent, etc. By doing away with slums the entire community will benefit not only socially but economically. I believe there would result a definite diminution of crime and the entire social outlook would be improved.

Let us hope that Laurence Veiller is correct when he says"... the time is approaching - if one can read the signs aright - when there will be a more insistent demand on the part of our citizens for dealing with this social menace", the slum.

2. Article by Laurence Veiller on The Housing Problem in the United States.
DESIREs IN HOUSING

Perhaps our one great consolation lies in the fact that an American city never seems to be finished. It is in a constant condition of change. In this change we must not allow the problem of the potential slum to gain strength. By the potential slum I mean those houses in the better sections which are not being kept up. Such houses should not be allowed to deteriorate.

And what is our desire for American housing? What should our desire be? We all have a philosophy of life and in that philosophy there are two factors; first, an ideal toward which we are or should be climbing; second, the necessity of dealing with things as they are and still make some progress toward our ideal. Why could we not adopt a housing philosophy based upon these same factors? What would our ideal be? New healthy homes should be provided to replace those that give rise to undesirable conditions. Minimum standards of housing should be set and carried out and these "minimum standards should at least be such as to safeguard its weaker members from the danger of being submerged by circumstances."¹ Even the poorest offered should be a fit place in which to live.

The house in which we would want all American children born and reared would be

1. Placed in good, healthful surroundings. The city or

¹ The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community.
town would have a definite zoning program. There would be enough space about the house to get a great deal of light and air and space for a garden; to have proper drainage about the house. There would be a pleasant view from all the windows. The house would be attractive without as well as within.

2. The house itself would be relatively safe and sanitary. It would be free from dampness; it would have sound construction and as far as possible protection against fire. This would include safe stairways, two exits, no fire pockets, fire resisting material around and over heaters and between chimney and wood members. There would be hot and cold water. And to avoid possible accidents in the house there would be compulsory lighting for stairs, closets, attic, and basement with switch control. All fixtures would be insulated.

3. Since there is space about the building there would be adequate sunlight and arrangements would be made for proper ventilation. As far as possible the house would be air-conditioned. The sun-porch windows would be of vitaglass, or similar material, so as to get as much benefit from the ultra-violet rays of the sun as possible. The artificial lighting would be properly spaced and would be of the sort, probably direct-indirect, so as not to cause eye-strain.
4. The ideal house would contain sufficient rooms to take care of the family comfortably and without overcrowding. In the first place the rooms would be conveniently arranged. There would be no waste space; all would be used from possible laundry and recreation rooms in the cellar to storage rooms in the attic. There would be a large living-room to meet the needs of the social life of the family; sufficient bedrooms and other rooms to fit the needs of the modern family and to serve twenty-four hours of the day.

As far as possible this house would contain modern equipment. I say "as far as possible" because changes along the line of equipment are being made almost daily. "By far the most sweeping changes in homes in the past century have occurred in connection with accessory equipment - plumbing and sanitary facilities, heating services, lighting equipment, electrical appliances, motor transport involving the garage, communication facilities, etc."¹ Add to these requirements the adequate facilities for social life and friendly intercourse for "the durable satisfactions of life are dependent to a great extent upon the character and form of the home."²

It is gratifying to know that we have more and more literature on the subject of "ideal housing". I wish that every young man and woman in America would acquire for themselves some housing philosophy before entering married

1. Bemis: The Evolving House - Vol. II.
2. Article by John Nolen on Meeting the Housing Needs of the Modern Family.
life. John Nolen certainly has a housing philosophy according to his creed as stated in the following suggestions.

2. City Planning, including site planning.
3. Zoning and restrictions by neighborhood action or in deeds.
4. Raising the zoning requirements of apartments as close as possible to those for single family houses in respect to density, open space, gardens, orientation, air and sunlight, and privacy.
5. Land subdivision and the control of plots. Laying out larger parcels of land, 100 acres or more as a unit, when possible.
6. Wholesale building operations and factory methods. Economics in house construction through mass production.
7. Single-family detached or group houses, two rooms deep preferred. Always consideration of orientation, air and sunlight, garden space, location of traffic streets and insistence upon appropriate beauty obtained by technical skill. Better light. Better ventilation.
8. Increased beauty in the home.
11. More home ownership.
12. More new towns like Mariemont, Palos Verdes, Radburn. ¹

These suggestions all sound reasonable and workable. But we must remember that the solution of the housing problem lies in no magic material or formula. It will come only through intelligent, hard work on the part of many individuals and organizations, both national and local, public and private. We have to consider always the second factor in our housing philosophy; the four words that always cause us trouble "things as they are". "The trouble is that, on this side of the water, housing has always been a side issue, kicked about like the backyard cat. It has never been taken seriously. We have played at it but never taken up the task as a great patriotic and business obligation worthy of serious thought and endeavor. (Therefore, housing in America is far behind that in other countries. This is a barrier to be dealt with but it is not insurmountable. It is one of the "things as they are."

... The task seems huge only because we have never intelligently or even seriously grappled with it. Public interest is required, leadership is required, adequate legal machinery is required. When these are provided, the death knell of a national curse, almost as black as that of

¹. Article by John Nolen on Meeting the Housing Needs of the Modern Family.
slavery, will have sounded, and America will take a forward step toward her housing ideal.

1. Pink: The New Day in Housing.
CHAPTER III.

OBSTACLES TO IMPROVEMENT

LACK OF PUBLIC INTEREST

In the preceding chapter I have mentioned some of the things necessary to meet the present housing needs. Perhaps one of the greatest obstacles which keeps us from a housing goal is the lack of public interest. Those who are well housed seem to have little, if any, interest in how the other half lives. The attitude seems to be that it is a family matter so why interfere. Why should we worry if the others have not initiative enough and money enough to better their own conditions? Then, too, we may say, if we did make conditions better for certain people, they would not appreciate them; they do not want good housing imposed upon them and are not educated for it. Yes, without doubt they do need to be educated for it but whose responsibility is that? It cannot be left entirely to the school. There is a certain amount which must be assumed by the community as a whole. Great reforms do not come about through the efforts of a few. Nor will housing reform come in this way. Public interest must be aroused. The public as a whole must become "housing conscious". It must be looked upon as something that will be a good for the whole of society and therefore society as a whole must assume the responsibility. "The prosperity of a community
is measured not by the grandeur of a few large houses, but by the general average of taste shown in architecture, furnishing, gardens, and maintenance of small or medium-sized houses.¹ The social consequences which come from bad housing effect the general public, rich and poor alike. Therefore, why not take an interest in and a responsibility for the basic causes of these social influences?

INFLUENCE OF WEALTHY

One reason it may be difficult to work up public interest in better housing is the fact that, particularly in reference to the slum districts, ownership is often in the hands of wealthy and politically influential citizens. Recently I heard of a house in a slum district - yes, in Boston - in which there was absolutely no water. And yet people were presumably living in it - I say existing in it! Why was something not done about it? Because it was owned by wealthy people and apparently they couldn't or shouldn't be approached about it. The attitude seemed to be - yes, it is unfortunate and these people shouldn't be living like this but there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. It is too bad the owners of such houses cannot be forced to live under such conditions themselves for a week or so. Then perhaps things would begin to happen.

¹The owners of sub-standard houses, which, although paying a considerable return on the investment, are unsuited for

1. Article by Richardson Wright on Slums and Waste.
human habitation, would necessarily resent any competition in low cost housing which the Government might undertake in order to salvage what is left of the building industry and to increase employment in the building trades. ¹ These owners not only will not do anything about conditions themselves but they want everyone else to leave their affairs alone, keep hands off, as it were. The rent which they receive gives them interest on their capital and that is a fair and just business return.

I have already mentioned the fact that politicians are led to believe that the existence of slums should never be referred to. It seems to come down to the point that those who could, financially and politically, influence conditions for the better, absolutely refuse to face facts as they are. The conditions are there, but we must not see them or talk about them. We have bigger things to do. Social reform is not our task. Our business is politics.

ECONOMIC REASONS

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to housing improvement is finances. Economically the people themselves are able to do very little to better housing conditions. "A set of simple calculations may be set down to prove that only a small part - perhaps not more than one-third - of American families have incomes large enough to permit the

¹ Article by Dr. Carol Aronovici on Housing the Workers of America.
financing of new buildings or the occupation of new constructions. Fully one-third of American families have incomes not in excess of $1200 annually; a second third have incomes between $1200 and $2000; only the top third have incomes in excess of $2000. In 1929 the average building cost (exclusive of land, promotion and financing costs) of one family dwellings in 257 American cities was $4915.1 If the house could sell for $4500 - outside of $3000 first mortgage, there would be $585 annually for interest, amortization, taxes, etc. Rental would have to be about the same. This is altogether too much for a family with an income of $2000 or less. High ideals are all right but it is useless to require of a group standards too high for its economic ability. This is the point at which our housing philosophy cannot function and "things as they are" must be faced.

One reason houses cost so much is the fact that so many different tradesmen are involved. The housing industry is a heterogeneous mass of small industries and these are subdivided into very small units. And they are all independent of each other. There is no semblance of co-operation. All building trades are highly unionized and repeatedly have obtained increased wages out of harmony with those of other industries. (The only conclusion that is based on intelligence is that we must reduce

1. Article on Housing. Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences.
building costs and it can be done.) Aside from labor costs, there are other ways in which the cost of building may be reduced, shown in the following chart.

1. Large-Scale Planning
   Reduces cost of streets, utilities, financing. Increases amount of open green space. Improves quality of architectural design by adapting lot size to house and block size to terrain.

2. Mass-Production
   Reduces cost of material and labor by simplification of manufacturing processes and unitization of parts.

3. Reduction of Financial Charges
   a. Limited Dividends. Voluntary investment at lower rates than those for speculative housing.
   b. State Loans on approved housing at low rate of interest with long-term amortization.

4. Community Control of Land Use

TOTAL REDUCTION

With these reductions it would be possible to reach the middle third income-group. For the lower third, composed of the underpaid or those with no incomes at all, there must be either higher, regular wages or a direct subsidy. Subsidies, of one form or another, have been used to a considerable extent in Europe. In the slum-clearance schemes of Holland and England most of the subsidy is a direct grant in aid of the owners of such property. In Vienna rent-levels were kept low in order to make it possible for export industries to pay lower wages than they

1. Bauer: Modern Housing.
could otherwise have done. In such cases the subsidy is largely a grant in aid of industry. Still another method of subsidy is instead of giving dole, to place such people in good houses and subsidize their rent. In order to make good housing available to the poor some sort of subsidy will have to be adopted.

Then, too, the removal of undesirable districts is costly to the community. In these days it is very difficult to get money for starting new projects. The complete sum needed and the amount of time required to carry out a desirable housing program seem to be somewhat staggering. "Assuming that the Government is not concerned with the reconstruction of old and inadequate homes, it would take at least three years, with the present equipment and organization of the building industry, to catch up with the normal demands of housing. It is, therefore, obvious that the housing program of this country can easily be calculated, in terms of new construction and in terms of approximate costs, at from three and a half to four and a half billions of dollars. This need being so well known, it seems strange that the one program of the New Deal which is lagging behind all others, is the housing program."¹

Yes, a building program requires money and even though the Government may assist financially there is a

¹. Article by Dr. Carol Aronovici on Housing the Workers of America.
great deal to be borne by the community itself. "Yet London finds that good housing pays, that slums are more costly to maintain than to wipe out."¹ I believe that if the public becomes "housing conscious" and if leaders will come forward, there will be a way of getting the money to proceed with plans for better housing.

LACK OF LEADERSHIP

Any reform measure to be successful requires capable, intelligent and sane leadership. This is something which is much needed in a better building program but which has been greatly lacking in the past. Financial leadership is needed. Specialized leadership is needed. "Sound general principles, scientifically and expertly administered, are available in this age of engineering and should be brought into play."²

The Government should assume part of the housing responsibility. There should be, shall we say, State Departments consisting of specialists whose principal jobs would be to work out plans for better housing. For example, a statistical department might estimate the number and size of families for quite a few years to come and how much rent they could pay; a technical department would consist of architects, engineers, town planners, social scientists, physicians, who would consider the problem from all angles; a planning department would study the

¹. Pink: The New Day in Housing.
². Bemis: The Evolving House - Vol. II.
entire plan. Minimum standards could be established by the Government, classifications kept, rents studied, and statistical information be made available for all. With such leadership much could be accomplished.

GOVERNMENT AND LEGAL MACHINERY

I think we all realize that we cannot proceed very far toward our goal for better housing until there are not only definite minimum legal requirements but until these minimum requirements are enforced. For example, it is accomplishing nothing to have a law relative to sanitary living requirements unless that law is actually carried out. Housing inspection should be done by those properly qualified for such work. We must have laws regulating sanitation, space, zoning, safety, and these must be enforced. "Legislation often defeats the very purpose for which it is devised ... Legislation involving distinctly scientific and technical features is much too often influenced by the ignorance of the masses and by the political intrigue of their representatives." ¹

And for financial reasons, if for no other, a community needs government assistance in carrying out building programs. But the government must enter into the program purely from the housing angle. "As soon as the Government can separate its policies in housing from its desire to rehabilitate the structure of bankrupt financial

¹ Bemis: The Evolving House - Vol. II.
institutions, and establish a basis of housing-finance consistent with the rent-paying resources of the wage earners who are most in need of low cost housing, we shall have the kind of housing that we need and at rentals that the people can afford.¹

Some may ask why the government should have any part in housing. "In general the relationship between government and its people in the matter of housing provision should reflect a control-and-develop policy. Government housing aid should be of a sort to strengthen the economic position and not weaken it; it must increase, not decrease, the nation's income, its total unpledged wealth, and the average man's power to earn and to buy. Aid of this sort involves sound planning of all features of community growth including the safeguarding of economic resources through which that growth year by year, may be attained; and through which the inevitable obsolescence in slum and blighted area may be concurrently liquidated. And aid of this sort includes building and sanitary regulation, technically responsive to the ever-changing needs for the protection of body and health on the one hand and improvement in methods of building on the other; zoning laws governing sectional growth, and laws regulating the use of public services; and promotion of the home asset through the control and development of housing credit in order that it may be sound and liquid."²

1. Article by Dr. Carol Aronovici on Housing the Workers of America.
2. Bemis: The Evolving House - Vol. II.
CHAPTER IV.

STEPS TO IMPROVEMENT

Although there are many obstacles in the way of improvement there are certain definite steps which have been taken in the right direction.

GOVERNMENT

By provision of the National Recovery Act - Section 202 - "The Administrator, under the direction of the President, shall prepare a comprehensive program of public works, which shall include among other things the following: . . . (d) construction under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum-clearance projects . . ." ¹ To be sure we have not gone as far along this pathway as we might wish but at least we have made a start.

Not only can the government help in an economic way but it can help in social reform. Surely laws governing occupancy would reduce slum conditions; laws governing sanitation would safeguard and improve public health, and so on. The fact that government has taken a step in housing can most assuredly be a step in the right direction if properly guided, and not allowed to become a part of political machinery.

The present program of the Federal Government has to do with buying or building a house and with

¹ Article on At Last - Substantial Federal Aid for Public Works and Housing.
repairing or modernizing property. Under this program it is possible to buy or build a house by investing as little as 20% of the cost and borrowing the balance (up to 80% of the appraised value but not more than $16,000) from an approved lending institution, covered by Government insurance. The repayment of this loan can be arranged on a monthly basis covering a period of 12, 15, or 20 years, each monthly payment to cover the interest and a part of the principal sum borrowed, a twelfth part of the annual taxes, mortgage insurance premium, and the fire and other hazard insurance premiums.

Title I of the National Housing Act - housing renovation and modernization - provides for a program designed to stimulate immediate activity in the fields of repair and modernization of existing properties. Up to $2000, depending on one's income, may be borrowed from any financial institution approved by the Federal Housing Administration for improvements on any one property. The notes for such a loan may run for any number of months up to five years. Where the conditions are satisfactory to the Federal Housing Administration for borrowing to buy or repair a house, the way provided by the terms enables one to repay the loan from monthly income.

ZONING AND CITY PLANNING

City planning and zoning has accomplished much
in recent years for better housing. It is a means of promoting sound social growth. Many things can be and have been accomplished by zoning; set back of houses; distances between houses, to allow for light and air; limitation of height of buildings; regulation against overcrowding; conservation of residential neighborhoods from intrusion by business and industry; provision for parks and playgrounds; etc. And all of these combine to promote sound social growth.

City planning does much toward stabilization of the neighborhood and this, in turn, has the effect of stabilizing the individual home. "... the physical plan or pattern of the territory of the city or other community has an unescapable influence upon the quality of life in every part of that city or community, and particularly upon the residential parts ... The planning commission should endeavor to guide the natural tendency toward the creation of minor units so that each division of a city will, in truth, possess an individuality, a character and soul of its own which will foster community pride and in the end develop happier home life and better government."

Indeed "one of the most hopeful signs of the present time is increasing reliance upon intelligent, trained planning of the city."  

In the report of the President's Conference on

2. Bemis: The Evolving House - Vol. II.
Home Building and Home Ownership the following basic principles in planning an urban neighborhood community were given. Zoning and city planning have done much toward accomplishing some of these ends.

"1. It should be the size of an elementary school district.
2. It should be bounded by arterial highways.
3. It should have a system of small parks and playgrounds planned for its peculiar needs.
4. Its school and other institutions should be grouped around a central open space.
5. It should have one or more retail shopping areas located in its periphery at traffic junctions.
6. It should have a special internal street system fashioned so as to promote the safety and convenience of residents and discourage the intrusion of through traffic."  

GARDEN CITY

"The definition of the true garden city adopted by the Council of the Garden Cities and Town-planning Association, so often quoted, probably cannot be improved upon: 'A garden city is a town designed for healthy living and industry; of a size that makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger; surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being in public ownership or held in

1. The President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership: Housing and the Community
trust for the community'.

This is a type city which can be worked out in some communities and not in others. It has been tried out more extensively abroad than in America. "The garden city movement merely crystallizes an economic need and by the use of modern methods of town planning as well as co-operative financing, profit sharing, and administration promises to rid the new communities of the evils and dangers of constantly threatening city life."^2

RADBURN

Radburn is a town which has been definitely planned for this so-called motor age. It is an urban community and politically is part of the Borough of Fair Lawn, in Bergen County, New Jersey. Geographically, it is quite near Paterson, Passaic, Hackensack and Ridgewood. "Historically, it has been the home for nearly three centuries of a sturdy folk of Dutch origin, the influence of the Hollanders having been kept fresh in each generation by new immigration from the Netherlands, and two of the principal fixed highways which we found ready-made to our hand in Radburn are plainly to be seen on the maps prepared for General Washington and by the geographer of the Continental Armies. Socially, the background has been entirely agricultural, the community life finding its home in the Grange Hall, the accepted standards being highly individu-

1. Pink: The New Day in Housing.
2. Aronovici: Housing and the Housing Problem.
alistic and the contacts with New York very largely only through the economic nexus of Gansevoort Market."

The ones planning this town have been assembled by the City Housing Corporation. A Mr. Bing and the Board of Directors have been responsible for its financing and its major decisions.

First let us consider Radburn's street and park pattern. The streets of most communities are laid out in a sort of checker-board pattern and accommodate traffic awheel, traffic afoot, and act more or less as playgrounds. In laying out Radburn, planned we must remember for the motor age, it was necessary to consider the convenience of the motor car for pleasure and for business and also to consider how this could be accomplished with minimum amount of danger attendant thereon. The planners of Radburn re-distributed the functions of the streets. "Essentially the scheme is based on the use of a unit which . . . we call a super-block. The super-block consists of a central core of open park land rimmed by a public street devoted entirely to foot traffic or play, this being surrounded by a series of lanes or culs-de-sac, short streets devoted entirely to wheel traffic, closed at the interior end, but open to and connecting at the outer end with a wide highway which surrounds the whole super-block and which is again devoted exclusively to wheel traffic." 1

Groups of super-blocks center about school and play-field. Children living in these blocks may walk to school without having to cross main traffic arteries.

The houses are grouped about lanes, and each has practically a front door on two streets, with no back door, and no back yard. No house is more than 400 feet from the principal motor highway and no more than 400 feet from a park. Each house has its motor street and most houses have garages built into them.

Definite reservations are being made for industry, at the southerly end of the city, and also for commercial needs. Zoning will restrict certain sections for residential purposes, others for industrial sites, etc. "The business blocks will have a central core of parking space or garage space, bringing parking close to the store, as in the residential area the green park was brought close to the home." ¹

The Radburn Association, a membership, non-profit corporation, has been set up, which "has accepted the responsibility of enforcing the restrictions incorporated in the deeds and the declarations of restrictions. It has taken title to the park lands to be held for the use of the people of Radburn. It has undertaken to provide supplemental municipal service." ¹

Radburn is attempting "to prove in a living

city that Design and Control will make for greater health, greater convenience, greater economy, and greater beauty than ever can be realized by Drift and Complacency."

Radburn is surely a most fascinating experiment and its development should be watched by all those interested in better housing.

PREFABRICATED HOUSE MOVEMENT

The American House, Inc., of New York is about to market ready-made houses on a large scale. This means the bringing of mass production into the housing field. "A four-room building with all necessary equipment, but not including furniture, is expected to sell for about $3800. A financing scheme is being worked out whereby the purchaser may pay in installments of $38 per month over a 15-year period. If the plan can be effected, there will be no down payment, no mortgage; the purchaser will not begin paying until after he has moved in, and at the end of 15 years the house is his. The price will include insurance on the life of the purchaser, so that if he dies during the period of the installment payments, the house at once becomes the property of his heirs without further expense. There are twelve models of houses ranging up to nine rooms and three baths, the probable price for the latter being about $10,000." We may well ask, what is to become of the building trades? We must wait to see how these ready-

made houses are accepted by the public. It is possible that such mass production may promote steady employment. "For the present, it is sufficient to note that scientific research has here produced a really notable step forward in a field heretofore archaic in its thinking and techniques, and that the results can hardly fail to be significant in the next few years."¹

ORGANIZATIONS FOR BETTER HOUSING

There are certain movements on foot which are seeking to deal with the housing situation. Various organizations have been formed by public spirited men and women who are conscious of existing conditions and who are anxious to remedy them as far as they are remediable. One organization worthy of note is the Chase Family Home Association of Manchester, N.H. By private initiative, private financing and on a self-liquidating basis this Association has put within the reach of workmen, seven-room houses with adequate lands and improved surroundings, at an average price of $3898.89, the rates of payment being fixed at $7.50 per home per week, with an estimated 15 years and 6 months before the house passed to the ownership of the occupant. Here is a project which should claim the interest of public spirited men and women in many communities.

The National Housing Association is a private

¹ Article on The Ready-Made House Arrives.
citizens' organization which is devoted to improvement of housing conditions throughout the country. It organizes associations and committees, gives aid in educational campaigns, in drafting, enacting and enforcing of housing legislature; it holds institutes in various sections and at stated intervals holds National Housing Conferences; it serves as a clearing-house for information and publishes literature dealing with housing subjects; and acts as the United States' representative of the International Housing Movement.

Better Homes in America is an organization which works with many of the government departments. Besides its national organization it has state and local committees through whom various home demonstrations are made showing improvement of architecture, landscaping, furnishings, etc.

The American Homemakers, Inc. have organized home information centers in many of the New England states.

There is a National City Planning Organization, a citizens' movement, working along similar lines to the National Housing movement but limiting its field quite definitely to the field of city planning.

Bureaus, Offices and Divisions of the United States Government which promote Home Improvement include among others The Bureau of Standards, the Division of Building and Housing, and The Bureau of Home Economics of
the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

A few states have associations organized to promote housing improvement and some communities have organized groups working on a better housing program.
SUMMARY

The question is often raised, how many of us would like to go back to the houses in which our ancestors lived, houses or rather rude huts built from forest timbers or dug into the hillside to act primarily as mere shelters? And yet, how fortunate were those pioneers that they did not have to think of the housing problem as it confronts us today.

Present day housing is an item of major importance; it is heterogeneous, unstandardized, costly and socially inadequate. Housing today includes all types from the beautiful mansion in the exclusive suburb to the tenement block in the slum district.

Bad housing, which among other things includes lack of light, inadequate ventilation, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and poor planning, is a fertile field for communicable diseases; it is the breeding ground for crime, vice, moral and sexual depravity. In fact general debility, social deterioration and revolutionary unrest may all be considered by-products of bad housing conditions.

In order to meet this housing problem it seems necessary to adopt some sort of housing philosophy, a philosophy which will set an ideal toward which we should work and at the same time realize the necessity of dealing with things as they are and still make progress toward our
goal. It is surely within the range of possibility to establish a standard of housing which could be obtainable by every self-supporting family, rich or poor, large or small, white or black, American born or foreign born, throughout our land.

Ah, yes, there will be obstacles in the way toward reaching our ideal. Public interest toward improvement lags. There is lack of leadership. A building program is costly. Government and legal machinery is not definitely set for our picture of ideal housing. Some sort of subsidy is necessary but why not subsidize the clearance of underprivileged areas instead of subsidizing the slum itself?

And yet, over against these obstacles are some very definite steps which will help us to climb up toward our goal. The Federal Government has adopted a program in housing which is surely a step in the right direction. Zoning and city planning is being carried on in a much larger scale than ever before. Definite examples, such as Garden Cities, Radburn built purposely for the motor age, and Mariemont are before us for study. Organizations, such as the National Housing Association and Better Homes in America, have been formed to work toward improvement of housing conditions throughout the country. There is a Prefabricated House Movement on foot to reduce the economic
cost of housing. I say "economic cost" because only better housing itself can reduce the intangible, social costs of bad housing.

R. C. McQuillen has said, "It is better to light the candle than to curse the darkness." Many housing "candles" are being lit throughout the country, both by altruistic individuals and by organizations who are becoming conscious of the housing "darkness". Our hope for the future is that the public as a whole will become "housing conscious", that the public as a whole will become aware of the "darkness" and proceed to light candles.
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