ALL AREAS FIGHT LOW-COST HOUSING: Bitter Protests Lodged By Germantown Residents

Staff Writers

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Bitter Protests Lodged By Germantown Residents

By STAFF WRITERS

Approximately 500 residents of Germantown, the majority of them Negroes, last week added their voices to a rising wave of protests emanating from all sections of Philadelphia, in opposition to recently-selected sites on which the Housing Authority plans to construct low-cost housing units.

The Germantown group, known as the Emlen Federation of Civic Organizations, last week scheduled a mass meeting for Thursday night (yesterday) at which time representatives from 10 different civic associations were to voice their sentiments regarding the construction of a low-cost housing project at Belfield ave. and Johnson st.

According to Drayton Bryant, community relations director of the Philadelphia Housing Authority —his office has already received "numerous protests" from several Germantown civic associations which are opposed to the proposed housing development. One written petition, which was signed by a group of residents who called themselves "The East Upsal St. Group," listed about 60 names.

The petition urged that the authority carefully consider before planning the construction of the Johnson St. Project "because the majority of us here are residents of more than 10 years. . . why create a ghetto here?"

OTHER LETTERS

Other letters expressed disapproval of the project because of fear of overcrowded conditions, lack of school space, and the danger of creating a traffic hazard.

A Germantown minister, the Rev. Othneil Thompson, of 200 E. Clivedon st., is the chairman of the Emlen Federation of Civic Organizations, comprised of 10 different block associations which are protesting the housing project. The

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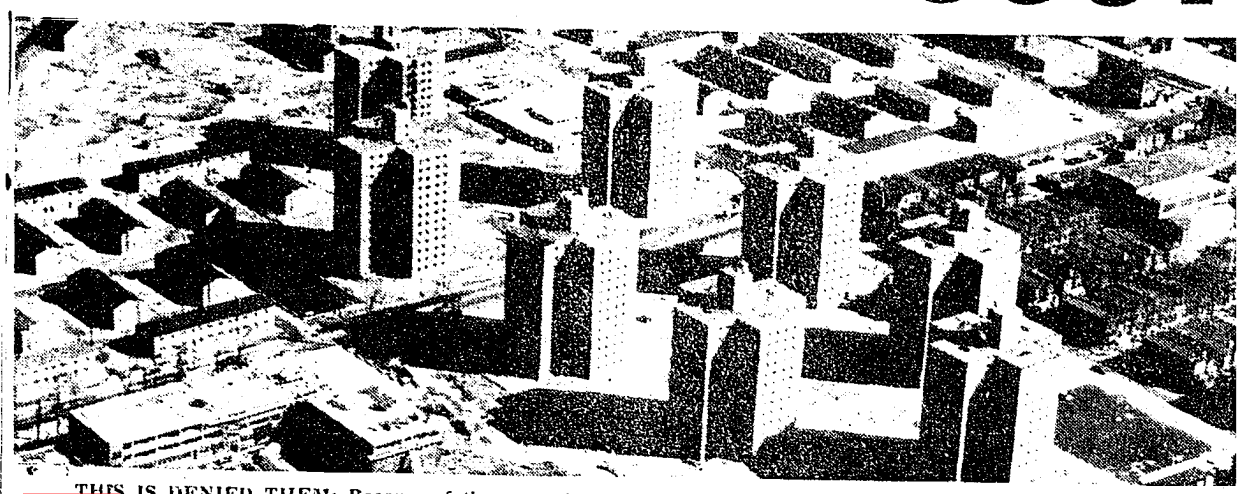

THIS IS DENIED THEM: Because of the mounting protests of citizens against new low-cost housing projects in certain areas, many of Philadelphia's underprivileged families may never know the joy of moving out of slum areas into modern units like the ones shown above at the Raymond Rosen Project.

THEY WANT A CHANCE: Hundreds of underprivileged families in Philadelphia, like the one shown above, hope and pray for the day they can move away from ramshackle and fire-hazzard dwellings and start life anew in low-rent housing projects within the limitations of their incomes. Mounting protests by citizens against new projects may condemn them and their children to the pitiful dwellings they have to call home.

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Bitter Protests

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minister, however, denied that he was leading the protest movement.

"My organization just represents these various organizations," he said. "As chairman, it is my job to attempt to reconcile the differences that have arisen."

The Rev. Mr. Thompson said that his organization was representative of "about 500" residents in the Germantown area. They include: the Johnson St. Neighbors, the East Hortter St. Civic Association, the Cliveden Improvement Association, the Upsal St. Group, the Lower Mt. Airy Civic Association, the Emlen Home and School Association, the East Sharpnack St. Group, the East Phil-Ellena St. Association, the Clearview Johnson Group and the Belfield Ave. Home Owners Association.

IRON OUT DIFFERENCES

The minister added that the meeting Thursday night which was to be held in Cliveden Park, was intended to help iron out differences in opinion as to the proposed housing project. He denied that the meeting was called to condemn the project.

"Some Germantown residents are in favor of the new project," the minister added, "and their opinions will also be considered and evaluated."

Ironically enough, the Germantown group had scheduled their meeting only one day after a family of nine persons, including six children, had burned to death in an overcrowded tenement house in the heart of North Philadelphia's slums.

DEVALUATION IDEA HIT

The Rev. Mr. Thompson emphatically denied that he or the Federation officially believed that the new housing project would bring about the devaluation of real estate property.

"If any other member organizations have claimed that they believed the newly-proposed project would cause depreciation of property values, they did so without the Federation's approval," he said.

"I frankly believe that Germantown needs a low-cost housing unit," the minister stated. "The Federation's only disagreement with the proposed development is the location."

Housing official Drayton Bryant lashed back at the petition signers Monday afternoon when he told a Tribune reporter: "Everyone is in favor of public housing as long as it's not next door to them."

The Rev. Mr. Thompson told the Tribune that he had invited Bryant to attend last night's meeting to express the views of the Housing Authority on the proposed Johnson St. projects.

The wave of protests from residents of Germantown followed closely on the heels of an organized opposition campaign mapped out by a group of residents of Upper Elmwood, in West Philadelphia, who recently held a mass meeting to denounce the proposed construction of a new housing project in that neighborhood.

Meeting at the Good Shepherd Roman Catholic Church, of which the Rev. Clair Hummil is pastor, nearly 1,000 persons heard various civic leaders urge that they strongly protest the construction of a low-cost public housing project to be known as "Greenway."

Although the neighborhood is predominantly white Roman Catholic, several Jews and Negroes were in the audience. The following day, the Philadelphia Housing Authority offices at 42 S. 15th st. was bombarded with an avalanche of letters and telegrams protesting the proposed Greenway development.

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