

Many landlords are known to be sluggish in observing maintenance standards and unenthusiastic about rehabilitation or sound methods of conservation. Under conditions of shortage, many of them receive steady income on their deteriorating properties. But this difficulty does not result entirely from the greed of landlords as a class. There is a natural reluctance of any property owner to pay for either maintenance or improvements when he does not know what the future holds for his property. Most of our cities have had no housing survey and have produced no master plan for housing renewal or rehabilitation. With the constant, even increasing, threat of sudden ad hoc redevelopment plans, a central city property owner has little reason to take a long term view of property maintenance. But show him an overall official city plan calling for the retention of his salvageable property, and take determined measures of enforcement, and he may see some virtue in improvement or conversion or rehabilitation, as well as in the measures of maintenance which are required to assure income in the long run.

Secondly, the lack of public support for measures to improve or conserve existing housing, is in part, a result of the popular pre-occupation with the shiny new house. Thanks to magazines, newspapers and other advertising media, social status is identified with a new suburban house and a new automobile. It is here that we find one of the weaknesses of the "filtering-down" theory: it is completely inconsistent with the almost sanctified belief that when people are all ready to begin home-making they should start in a new suburban house. If we are to make adequate use of existing housing, we must overcome this artificially-induced indifference to it, see that the social stigma is removed from it, and enlist positive public support for a constructive program.

Rental Housing:

A social stigma has also been attached to rental housing. This stigma has helped to create an indifference to the building of medium and low rental housing at the very period in our national development when the mobility of our population has been high. The lack of both private and public investment in this field has been one of the reasons why we have not closed the gap between need and supply. If we want to expand housing construction to take care of the real needs of the large population of non-family and unmarried people whose mobility is essential but who require decent accommodation and sound neighbourhoods we must do everything we can to erase the impression that the tenant of multiple-unit rental housing is a kind of second class citizen without "a stake in his country".

Some of the difficulty about rental housing arises from the fact that we associate it historically with the slum tenements of the great cities. We assume quite unnecessarily that the apartment or row-house dweller must be deprived of green space and open air. In this country we have seen few examples of civilised living in well-designed multiple dwellings. But encouraging examples exist; and if we are so provincial that we do not seek out the best modern experience in foreign architecture and neighbourhood planning we may hurt only ourselves. We can seek ideas abroad without being mere copyists. Fortunately some of our architects, planners and civic leaders are now beginning to create designs under Canadian conditions which may demonstrate that multiple housing is not inconsistent with either economy or beauty.

It is probably safe to predict that, of all the housing we have produced in the post-war years, it may not be the rental housing which will become slums of the future, but rather the monstrous subdivisions of box-like single single-family homes built on grids, without benefit of either architect or town planner.