

Quality Increasingly Important

I am also suggesting that the quality of new houses is coming to have a more important bearing than it did in the past on the quantity of new houses built from year to year. There is no call to abandon the objective of quantity. But in order to achieve it we must all place more emphasis on new ways and kinds of housing. There is a mutuality in the two objectives.

We have been so concerned with the problems of meeting the increase in demand from year to year that we have not had much time to devote to new ways of housing or renewal of deteriorating housing and slum clearance. Houses, like automobiles, become obsolete and should at the appropriate time either be replaced or turned in for new ones. As you find it easier to meet the demand that derives from growth you will find it more important to develop these other market potentials. There is every reason why we should expect a continued high level of house building if you make the necessary innovations and adaptations in design, engineering and salesmanship.

As distinct from these great opportunities to add to the demand for new housing, there is also the need for urban repair, redevelopment and renewal.

We need greater emphasis on urban planning, housing design and neighbourhood balance. Not all of them are as controllable or as manoeuvrable as we might wish. But they are not beyond control. You could help by urging each city and town to lay down a master plan, and if there already is one, you might add your voices to those insisting on its implementation. By your own performance in better unit design and in better layout of projects and subdivisions, you too will create the new public opinion that will lead to demands for civic redevelopment.

The Government also has a role to play in the improvement of housing conditions. And I am not referring only to the obvious areas of Government participation such as slum clearance and the provision of subsidized low rental housing. We have a role also in assisting you to improve the quality of the new product reaching the market. We have a role to play in research and promotion in all aspects of community planning and housing design. To the extent that the Government can promote better planning practices and better design, we will also help to widen the housing market.

Much progress has already been made. In all the aspects of housing quality, from urban planning to plain workmanship, there has been considerable improvement in the past five years. But the provision of only slightly better housing is not going to do much to stimulate the demand of those who have almost as good housing. As an immediate objective we must strive for the exemplary. Each worthy achievement will