

Officials in Washington And Housing Problems

A Published Letter to the *Los Angeles Times*

June 21, 1986

Your paper has two articles incredibly back-to-back (June 6).

On the front page there is a story of the Democratic-run House voting to approve a Republican-sponsored proposal halting construction of virtually all new public housing for the poor: The House opted instead to use the money to upgrade existing, deteriorating units.

This at first sounds like a good idea, because nationwide there is a glut of public housing units that could be made habitable. However, it is then pointed out that in the big cities there is a desperate shortage of public housing for the poor, which cannot be solved by simply renovating, sometimes tearing down existing units. Nevertheless, the representatives chose to

vote for renovation *or* construction instead of for the obvious solution of renovation *and* construction, using the same amount of money but in ways tailored to local conditions.

Oh well, this lack of creative, compassionate thinking is to be expected from "leaders" following a President who, according to the next news article, is having a hard time deciding whether or not to accept a luxury dog "White House," professionally decorated with parquet flooring, Reagan-red curtains, and a silver jellybean bowl!

Our country seems to be going to the dogs, which ain't all bad—they get better housing!

Imagination in Housing

A Related Editorial by the *Los Angeles Times*

June 25, 1986

Believe it or not, Congress is edging toward creating a new housing program, and in these days of save, don't spend, the measure even has bipartisan support. That may be because it mixes the notion of federal support for housing

in the inner city with the American dream of home ownership. Contained in the omnibus housing bill soon to come before the Senate, the program deserves the widest possible support.

The potential housing breakthrough is called the Nehemiah housing opportunity program—Nehemiah having been the biblical prophet who rebuilt the walls of ancient Jerusalem after it was destroyed by the Babylonians. ...

The authors of the Nehemiah legislation anticipate that \$150 million in federal money could help in the construction of at least 10,000 homes across the country—possibly more. ...

The Nehemiah plan is of course only one element in the housing legislation that was passed by the House this month. That measure would redirect most federal public housing construction money into rehabilitation.