





7. Q. DOES A FAIR HOUSING LAW AFFECT THE PROPERTY RIGHTS OF A HOUSE OWNER?

A. TO A CERTAIN EXTENT IT DOES, AS DO ZONING LAWS, BUILDING AND HOUSING STANDARDS AND CODES, FIRE PREVENTION LAWS, AND MANY OTHER LAWS DEALING WITH REAL PROPERTY. LIKE ANY OTHER RIGHT, THE RIGHT OF A HOUSE OWNER IS NOT ABSOLUTE BUT IS SUBJECT TO LIMITATIONS AND RESTRICTIONS PROVIDED FOR BY LAW IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

8. Q. WOULD THE PROPOSED LAW LIMIT MY RIGHT TO CHOOSE A ROOMER OR LODGER WITHIN MY HOME?

A. NOT AT ALL. THE PROPOSED LAW DOES NOT AFFECT THE LETTING OF ROOMS TO LODGERS WITHIN A FAMILY DWELLING.

9. Q. WHY ARE RELIGIOUS AND DENOMINATIONAL INSTITUTIONS EXEMPTED?

A. ALTHOUGH RELIGIOUS GROUPS IN R. I. HAVE NOT REQUESTED THIS EXEMPTION, THE U. S. CONSTITUTION PROVIDES THAT CONGRESS (AND BY INFERENCE THE STATE LEGISLATURES) "SHALL MAKE NO LAW RESPECTING AN ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION". RELIGIOUS GROUPS HAVE THE RIGHT TO GIVE PREFERENCE IN THEIR ACTIVITIES TO THEIR OWN MEMBERS, AND THE PROPOSED LAW HAS BEEN SO WORDED AS TO REMOVE THE POSSIBILITY OF DOUBT AS TO CONSTITUTIONALITY.

10. Q. CAN RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS BIAS AND PREJUDICE BE ELIMINATED BY LEGISLATION SUCH AS A FAIR HOUSING LAW?

A. NOT BY LAW ALONE. ELIMINATION OF BIAS AND PREJUDICE CANNOT BE ACHIEVED IN THE ABSENCE OF AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM BASED ON THE AMERICAN CONCEPT OF EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY. FAIR HOUSING LEGISLATION HELPS IN THIS EDUCATIONAL PROCESS INASMUCH AS IT DEMONSTRATES THAT THE ORGANIZED COMMUNITY FIRMLY ENDORSES AND SUPPORTS THIS CONCEPT.

IT IS THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF FAIR HOUSING LEGISLATION TO MAKE UNFAIR DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES UNLAWFUL WHILE THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS GOES ON TO REDUCE FEELINGS OF BIAS AND PREJUDICE. LEGISLATION ALONE CANNOT MAKE PEOPLE VIRTUOUS; ITS PURPOSE IS TO PROTECT INDIVIDUALS FROM INJUSTICE, AND THE COMMUNITY FROM THE EVILS RESULTING FROM ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.

11. Q. DOES THE ENTRY OF MINORITY FAMILIES CAUSE PROPERTY VALUES TO DECLINE?

A. NO. STUDIES IN SAN FRANCISCO, LOS ANGELES, PORTLAND, BALTIMORE, NEW YORK AND PHILADELPHIA, AND ACTUAL EXPERIENCE IN MANY OTHER LOCALITIES HAVE SHOWN THAT THE MOVING OF MEMBERS OF MINORITY GROUPS INTO A NEIGHBORHOOD DOES NOT RESULT IN THE DETERIORATION OF PROPERTY VALUES. IT IS THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STANDARD OF THE INHABITANTS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD, NOT THEIR RACE OR RELIGION, WHICH DETERMINES ITS CHARACTER, ITS DESIRABILITY AS A PLACE OF ABODE, AND THE TREND OF PROPERTY VALUES WITHIN THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

12. Q. IF ONE NEGRO FAMILY MOVES INTO A NEIGHBORHOOD, WILL THERE BE A FLOOD OF OTHER NEGRO FAMILIES?

A. THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED IN THE DOZENS OF NEIGHBORHOODS IN PROVIDENCE AND ELSEWHERE IN R. I. WHERE NON-WHITE FAMILIES HAVE BEEN LIVING FOR AS LONG AS A GENERATION. IF THE WHITE NEIGHBORS FALL VICTIMS TO PANIC-SELLING AND HYSTERIA AND MOVE OUT AT ONCE, THE RESULTANT VACANCIES MAY WELL BE TAKEN UP BY NON-WHITES WHO FIND IT DIFFICULT TO FIND HOUSING OUTSIDE OF THE SIX EXISTING GHETTOS IN PROVIDENCE. IF NON-WHITES ARE PERMITTED TO LIVE FREELY WHERE THEY WISH AND CAN AFFORD TO LIVE, THEY WILL BE EASILY INTEGRATED WITHOUT HEAVY CONCENTRATIONS. AFTER ALL, THERE ARE ONLY 2% OF NON-WHITES IN R. I.



12. Q. DO NEGROES MAINTAIN THEIR PROPERTY AS WELL AS WHITES?

A. AN EXAMINATION OF INTERRACIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS AND INTERRACIAL NEIGHBORHOODS PROVES THAT NEGROES MAINTAIN THEIR PROPERTY AS WELL AS OR BETTER THAN THEIR WHITE NEIGHBORS. THEY, TOO, HAVE A PROPERTY INTEREST IN THEIR HOMES AND A CIVIC INTEREST IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS. IT IS WRONG TO BLAME THE NEGRO FOR THE POOR CONDITION OF THE SLUM AREAS WHERE HE IS FORCED TO LIVE. THESE CONDITIONS ARE NOT CAUSED BY NEGRO OCCUPANCY. HE IS THE VICTIM, NOT THE CAUSE.

14. Q. WHAT MACHINERY DOES A FAIR HOUSING LAW SET UP TO IMPLEMENT THE BAN ON DISCRIMINATION IN HOUSING?

A. IT EXTENDS THE POWERS OF THE EXISTING R. I. COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION. THE COMMISSION WILL INVESTIGATE CHARGES OF UNFAIR DISCRIMINATION, AND, IF IT FINDS PROBABLE CAUSE FOR A CHARGE, WILL SEEK TO SETTLE THE MATTER BY PERSUASION OR CONCILIATION. IF SUCH EFFORTS FAIL, A HEARING IS HELD AT WHICH BOTH THE COMPLAINING PARTY AND THE PERSON CHARGED WITH SUCH DISCRIMINATION MAY PRESENT EVIDENCE. UPON THE EVIDENCE, THE AGENCY EITHER DISMISSES THE COMPLAINT, OR, IF IT FINDS THE CHARGE PROVED, ISSUES AN ORDER REQUIRING THE RESPONDENT TO CEASE AND DESIST FROM UNFAIR DISCRIMINATION IN THE SALE, RENTAL OR LEASE OF HOUSING FACILITIES. IT CAN BE EXPECTED THAT THE COMMISSION WILL BE AS SUCCESSFUL IN ITS PROGRAM OF EDUCATION AND CONCILIATION IN ITS WORK FOR FAIR HOUSING PRACTICES AS IT HAS BEEN IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES, PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS, AND PUBLIC HOUSING.

15. Q. DOES A FAIR HOUSING LAW PROVIDE CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR VIOLATORS?

A. NO. THE COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION SEEKS TO ACHIEVE ITS PURPOSES FIRST BY COOPERATION OF THE PARTIES CONCERNED (PERSUASION, CONCILIATION), AND, FAILING THIS, BY THE ISSUANCE OF "CEASE AND DESIST" ORDERS AS DESCRIBED ABOVE. IF SUCH AN ORDER IS IGNORED THE COMMISSION MAY GO TO THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR A "CEASE AND DESIST" ORDER. IF THIS COURT ORDER IS IGNORED, THE JUDGE MAY IMPOSE A PENALTY OF FINE OR IMPRISONMENT FOR A CIVIL, NOT CRIMINAL VIOLATION. AN APPEAL FROM THIS ACTION MAY BE TAKEN IN THE SUPREME COURT. DURING ITS TEN YEARS OF EXISTENCE IN R. I. THE COMMISSION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION HAS NOT YET BEEN REQUIRED TO SEEK A COURT ORDER, AND THERE HAVE BEEN NO PENALTIES IMPOSED BY A COURT.

16. Q. WOULD A FAIR HOUSING LAW GIVE ANY UNUSUAL ENFORCEMENT POWERS TO THE COMMISSION?

A. NONE WHATEVER. FOR TEN YEARS THE R. I. COMMISSION HAS HAD THE CUSTOMARY POWERS, DUTIES AND PROCEDURES GIVEN TO ALL SUCH ADMINISTRATIVE BODIES INCLUDING MANY STATE (AND FEDERAL) COMMISSIONS DEALING WITH REGULATION OF PRIVATE COMMERCE. THE PROPOSED LAW WOULD NOT INTRODUCE ANY INNOVATIONS OF PROCEDURE, BUT WOULD SIMPLY APPLY THE SAME METHODS THAT HAVE BEEN SO SUCCESSFULLY ADAPTED, ORIGINALLY TO EMPLOYMENT AND LATER BY EXTENSION TO PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS AND PUBLIC HOUSING. THE SCOPE OF THE COMMISSION'S CONCERN SHOULD ONCE AGAIN BE EXTENDED TO INCLUDE PRIVATE HOUSING SO AS TO STRENGTHEN FURTHER THE BASIC STRUCTURE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE STATE.

17. Q. IS FAIR HOUSING LEGISLATION CONSTITUTIONAL?

A. YES. LAWS AGAINST DISCRIMINATION HAVE BEEN UPHOLD CONSISTENTLY BY STATE AND FEDERAL COURTS INCLUDING THE U. S. SUPREME COURT. THE LATTER COURT HAS STATED THAT THE STATE HAS THE RIGHT TO "PUT ITS AUTHORITY BEHIND ONE OF THE CHERISHED AIMS OF AMERICAN FEELING BY FORBIDDING INDULGENCE IN RACIAL OR RELIGIOUS PREJUDICE". IN THE ONLY DECISION SO FAR DEALING SPECIFICALLY WITH A FAIR HOUSING LAW, SUCH A LAW HAS BEEN UPHOLD BY THE NEW YORK STATE SUPREME COURT AS CONSTITUTING A LEGITIMATE EXERCISE OF THE STATE'S POWER.