

Citizens United for a Fair Housing Law

MARCH 3, 1965

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DEAR FRIENDS:

THIS LETTER IS ADDRESSED TO THE MEMBERS OF CITIZENS UNITED AND TO SOME WHO WILL WANT, WE HOPE, TO BECOME MEMBERS. PLEASE SHARE IT WITH OTHERS OF YOUR FRIENDS WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN OUR WORK AND WHOM WE DO NOT KNOW YET.

THE PRIMARY REASON FOR WRITING AT THIS MOMENT IS TO TELL YOU THAT THE TIME TO GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR TO REMIND HIM OF YOUR POSITION ON FAIR HOUSING IS NOW. PRESENT INDICATIONS ARE THAT A BILL WILL BE REPORTED OUT OF THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR A VOTE ON THE FLOOR WITHIN THE NEXT MONTH. NATURALLY, IT IS MOST IMPORTANT THAT WE SPEAK CONVINCINGLY TO THE NEW MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATURE AND TO THOSE WHO LAST YEAR VOTED AGAINST FAIR HOUSING, BUT WE MUST NOT TAKE FOR GRANTED THOSE WHO VOTED FAVORABLY.

PLEASE, WILL YOU ALL PHONE OR SIT DOWN RIGHT NOW AND SEND OFF A BRIEF NOTE TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVE! EVEN IF YOU HAVE DONE THIS BEFORE AND HAVE NOTHING NEW TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO LET HIM KNOW THAT YOU ARE STILL INTERESTED AND, AT THE SAME TIME, PUT HIM IN THE POSITION OF BEING ABLE TO SAY THAT HIS MAIL IS STRONGLY FAVORABLE TO FAIR HOUSING. PLEASE -- AS SOON AS YOU FINISH READING THIS LETTER, SIT DOWN AND WRITE!

REGARDING LEGISLATION ITSELF, THE SITUATION IS THIS. AT THE MEETING OF OUR MEMBERSHIP ON MONDAY, JANUARY 18TH (WELL-ATTENDED DESPITE SOME GHASTLY WEATHER), IT WAS AGREED THAT CITIZENS UNITED SHOULD CO-OPERATE WITH THE COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR RACIAL JUSTICE. C.U. IS ONE OF TWENTY-SIX ORGANIZATIONS WHICH COMPOSE THE CCRJ AND IS REPRESENTED ON ITS SIX-MAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. AT THAT TIME, THE COUNCIL WAS ON RECORD AS FAVORING A BILL WHICH WOULD EXCLUDE FROM COVERAGE NO MORE THAN OWNER-OCCUPIED TWO FAMILY HOUSES. THREE BILLS ARE NOW IN THE LEGISLATURE -- ONE SPONSORED BY THE EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES GROUP (INTRODUCED IN THE SENATE BY SENATOR MICHAELSON) PROVIDING FOR COMPLETE COVERAGE AND FOR INJUNCTION PROCEEDINGS; ONE SPONSORED BY GOVERNOR CHAFEE (INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE BY REPRESENTATIVE LIPPITT AND OTHERS; IN THE SENATE BY SENATOR BECHTOLD AND OTHERS); AND ONE SPONSORED BY THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP (INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE BY REPRESENTATIVE KAGAN AND OTHERS, BOTH OF THE LATTER EXCLUDING FROM COVERAGE TWO AND THREE FAMILY, OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSES.

AT A RECENT MEETING OF THE COUNCIL, THERE WAS UNHAPPY BUT GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT ONLY THE KAGAN BILL HAD A CHANCE OF PASSING, AND THE DECISION WAS MADE THEREFORE TO MAKE A FORMAL REQUEST THAT THE KAGAN BILL BE AMENDED IN COMMITTEE TO EXTEND THE COVERAGE TO INCLUDE

"OWNER-OCCUPIED THREE'S" BUT TO AVOID THE CONFUSION WHICH WOULD RESULT IF THE COUNCIL WERE TO SPONSOR A NEW BILL OF ITS OWN. WHATEVER OUR PERSONAL SENTIMENTS MAY BE, THEREFORE, THE CONSENSUS IS THAT THIS YEAR'S DISCUSSION OF FAIR HOUSING IS REALLY A DISCUSSION OF THE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP OR THE "KAGAN BILL".

FINALLY, MAY I REMIND YOU THAT CITIZENS UNITED HAS BEEN ACTIVE FOR SIX YEARS AND, DESPITE THE WELCOME PRESENCE OF MANY NEW ORGANIZATIONS ON THE SCENE, IT WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY UNTIL FAIR HOUSING IS PASSED. THIS IS PRELUDE TO NOTING THAT IT IS DUES TIME AGAIN. EVEN WITHOUT AN OFFICE THIS YEAR WE DO HAVE EXPENSES AND, TO BE BLUNT, WE HAVE A GOOD SIZED DEBT CARRYING OVER FROM 1964. RIGHT AFTER WRITING TO YOUR LEGISLATOR (!), PLEASE BE GOOD ENOUGH TO SEND YOUR CHECK TO OUR FUND-RAISING CHAIRMAN, MR. ERNEST NATHAN, 204 FREEMAN PARKWAY, PROVIDENCE 02906.

CORDIALLY,

Barry A. Marks

BARRY A. MARKS
GENERAL CHAIRMAN

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