

Cardinal's Statement on Open Housing

Here is the statement made by Lawrence Cardinal Shehan at the City Council hearing on an open occupancy bill Jan. 13, 1966.

I join with leaders of other religious faiths, of labor, of business, and of civil rights groups in urging the support of the Baltimore City Council for the proposed Fair Housing Ordinance now pending before this Honorable Body.

On previous occasions since I have become Archbishop of Baltimore I have expressed my concern about the plight of the Negro community in its search for decent housing. It would be a matter of overwhelming regret to our entire community should the explosive potentialities of the ghetto produce tragedies such as have torn asunder other major American urban communities.

The dignity of the individual requires that no prohibition be placed against any person with respect to his place of habitation simply because of his race, religion, or ancestry. The overwhelming persuasive moral argument which calls for statutory relief is one which cannot be postponed or crippled.

I have expressed my views to the Maryland Congressional Delegation to the effect that a national statute is the most desirable method of approaching a solution to discrimination in housing. Realizing, of course, that the sense of urgency which exists in our large cities does not weigh as heavily upon rural legislators, I would be less than realistic to assume that this ideal national goal is within immediate striking distance.

I have also requested the General Assembly of Maryland to pass state-wide legislation prohibiting discrimination in housing, and I have given my support to such legislation as House Bill 332, introduced in the last session of the General Assembly, as well as its counterpart in the State Senate.

I am aware that the Baltimore metropolitan community includes more than the geographical confines of Baltimore City. I understand full well that the political subdivisions surrounding Baltimore City should act in a timely fashion to adopt open occupancy legislation such as that which is pending before you, but I cannot be unmindful of the fact that the percentage of the Negro population in these surrounding political subdivisions is so small as to forestall prompt passage of such legislation.

The legislative remedy must be applied in the areas where the social sickness is most apparent. This means, of course, that Baltimore City must take the leadership in providing metropolitan-wide open occupancy legislation. If each political subdivision were to await the action of the other, the mounting tensions brought about by crowded conditions may possibly explode before a common consensus is arrived at. According, I call upon this Body to enact into law the Fair Housing Ordinance before you. I am mindful of the pressures under which you find yourselves. I know that there exists within your Body a desire for statesman-like leadership.

I pledge you my support and the support of the Arch-

diocese of Baltimore in assisting and encouraging the passage of similar legislation in the political subdivisions surrounding our beloved City. I am aware of the arguments that are made about the possibilities of a population which may desert our City, and I am equally aware of the inequity that may be visited upon some of those developers who have made their commitment to build within Baltimore City and who may find themselves placed at a great economic disadvantage in the event that some of the dire predictions about urban flight to the suburbs should come to pass.

The heart of the race problem is a moral issue. Even if the percentage of the Negro population in Baltimore City were extremely small, rather than in excess of the one-third figure, the justice of the proposal before you would be unaffected. The argument for justice, however, coupled with the practical consideration of tensions, uneasiness, and potential massive resort to lawbreaking, give added impetus to the critical nature of the proposal before you.

I pledge you that this fight for social justice will not be placed upon your shoulders alone, but that the teaching and pastoral capacities of the Catholic Church will support you in what I ask you to do.

I call upon, then, to make this a matter of civic and social responsibility so as to render to the minorities their rights, and to assist Baltimore in the growth which we mutually desire to see.

Backed by Press

These editorials, from the *Evening Sun* and the *News American*, expressed support for open housing legislation also backed by Cardinal Shehan.

The Moral Argument

Except for a display of grossly bad manners on the part of the persons present, the hearing last night on the proposed open occupancy measure before the City Council should prove helpful to councilmen if only because of the impressive testimony offered them by the community's chief spokesmen for the major religious faiths. These men spoke out of their own deep convictions but it is entirely plausible to suppose that in doing so they also reflected the attitude of a majority of the members of the churches they represent. That is to say, it seems very likely that in taking the position they did Cardinal Shehan, Bishop Doll, Bishop Lord, Rabbi Shusterman and the Very Rev. John N. Peabody expressed the sentiment of a very large segment of the public.

All of them spoke, as it was fitting they should do, in terms of the moral argument supporting the open housing measure. As Bishop Doll said, the primary questions which councilmen and citizens must ask themselves are "Is it right? . . . Is it just?" And as Cardinal Shehan put it, "The dignity of the individual requires that no prohibition be placed against any person with respect to his place of habitation because of his race, religion or ancestry." No doubt they like many others wish that acceptance of this argument made resort to legislation unnecessary. But they recognize that civic and social responsibility cannot always wait on voluntary compliance. The Cardinal said clearly that he thinks "a national statute is most desirable" (in his State of the Union message the President told the country he would ask for such legislation) and that state-wide action holds the promise of being the next best way of dealing with the matter. But, he added, the moral considerations which call for relief from unjust discrimination "cannot be postponed or crippled." Therefore, he said, Baltimore "must take the leadership in providing metropolitanwide open occupancy legislation."

Every reasonable person realizes it is a difficult issue because it involves strong emotions and because serious questions must always be expected to arise about the nature, effectiveness and fairness of any particular legislative proposal. Baltimore's councilmen want and need guidance in reaching their decision. The hearing last night provided it in abundant measure.

Evening Sun, Jan. 14, 1966

Fair Housing

Like many members of the City Council, we are shocked by the boing which accompanied the appearance before that body this week of Cardinal Shehan.

The Cardinal appeared at the open hearings in the War Memorial Building, dressed in the plain garb of a parish priest, to lend the full weight of his spiritual authority to the fair housing measure which is now under consideration.

Regardless of one's views on this highly controversial measure, it would seem only common decency to give full and open-minded attention to the views of the churchman.

Cardinal Shehan stated the crux of the issue in a few brief, well-chosen words when he spoke of the "overwhelming persuasive moral argument" in favor of fair housing legislation, and went on to warn the City Council members against "the explosive potentialities of the ghetto."

Fair housing, beaten at the last session of the Council, has more going for it this time—including not only the full weight of the Cardinal's support, but also the courageous leadership of City Council President Thomas J. D'Alessandro 3d.

It is our hope that they will prevail over the forces of inertia, apathy, and ignorance.

News American, Jan. 15, 1966

Fair Housing Defeated

By NCWC News Service

The Baltimore City fair housing bill backed by Lawrence Cardinal Shehan was defeated this week by the City Council in a 13-8 vote.

Cardinal Shehan was the first speaker at a meeting of the Baltimore City Council.

The Cardinal testified to jeers and catcalls from a boisterous minority segment of the audience.

More than 2,000 persons attended the hearing, held in the War Memorial Building, to consider the provisions of a bill introduced by Thomas J. D'Alessandro III, president of the City Council.

Mr. D'Alessandro's bill was designed to forbid discrimination in the sale or rental of housing in Baltimore.

James W. Rouse, chairman of the Greater Baltimore Committee and "floor leader" for the bill's proponents, introduced Cardinal Shehan.

About half the audience rose and clapped as the 67-year-old prelate walked to the microphone. Others booed until the chairman silenced them.

CARDINAL SHEHAN said there is an "overwhelming, persuasive moral argument" in support of fair housing legislation. He warned his audience against "the explosive potentialities of the ghetto."

He asked the City Council to give leadership to the counties by passing fair housing legislation first. "The legislative remedy," he said, "must be applied in the areas where

the social sickness is most apparent."

Cardinal Shehan pledged his personal support and that of the Archdiocese of Baltimore in achieving passage of similar laws elsewhere throughout the state.

The Cardinal was escorted from the hall by police as the audience once again divided between jeers and cheers.

Other proponents of the bill included the Rt. Rev. John Wesley Lord, Bishop of the Baltimore Conference of the Methodist Church, the Rt. Rev. Harry Lee Doll, Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Maryland, Rabbi Abraham Shusterman of the Baltimore Board of Rabbis, Frank Kaufman, president of the Baltimore Jewish Council, and the Very Rev. John N. Peabody, president of the Maryland Council of Churches.

A speaker among the opponents of the bill was a cleric. The Rev. Robert T. Woodworth, who described himself as a "humble parish pastor," spoke out against the participation of his fellow clerics in what he termed "a strictly political matter."

Reverend Woodworth said

Oculists and Ophthalmologists
 Prescriptions Filled
 Glasses Adjusted Free
EVANS & HAWKINS
 OPTICIANS
 127 W. Reed St. • MU 5-2253
 Hours: 9 A.M. to 5 P.M.
 Sat.: 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.

the only moral issue involved was that of "individual property." He suggested the clergy-men might occupy themselves more constructively with such problems as the "tyranny of excessive taxation," "ban-the-Bible in schools," "filth in the mass media," and the "protection of communists here at home."

The Cardinal discounted a telephone threat on his life made before he appeared at the hearing.

INSURED SAVINGS

multiply faster with Liberal Dividends compounded semi-annually.

HOME MORTGAGES

tailored to suit your budget.

Call and open your Savings Account or to discuss your home financing problems.

Savings received before the 10th of the month earn dividends from the first of that month.

Hours To Suit Everyone
 Mon. thru Fri. 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 Wed. Evening 7 p.m. - 9 p.m.
 Friday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Closed Saturdays

Brehm

BUILDING ASSOCIATION

ORleans 5-1167

Belair Road at Erdman

Assets over \$18,000,000.00

REVIEWPOINT

The Vote on Open Housing

Evening Sun and News American

Editorials are Reprinted

Today on Page 3

There's a feeling of sadness, mixed with a feeling of shame, over the failure of the City Council to put Baltimore on the side of human justice. All forms of racial discrimination are less than moral, and to an increasing degree courts and Congress are making them less than legal.

The City Council has turned away from the morality of the issue and it has failed to establish legal protection against the violation of human rights. Given a choice between unrestricted property use and human dignity, the Council has aligned itself with property. This materialistic approach is as disturbing,

in some ways, as is the denial of human justice on a broad scale.

Thoughtful citizens are disturbed, too, by the rushing maneuver that caused open housing to be defeated without full discussion. Citizens are disturbed by the failure of some of the Councilmen who voted against the measure to explain their reasons. The atmosphere of cynicism that has enveloped City Hall might have been dissipated by candor.

The casting of a vote, particularly when a grave moral question is at issue, is a matter for the conscience of each member of the City Council. But once he has satisfied his conscience he has a further duty, as a public servant, to give his reasons for resisting the forward movement of charity and human dignity.