

United Indian Planners Association. . . A Look at Indian Housing

Along with other planning and economic development efforts, UIPA has been concerned with the development of adequate Indian housing. With the event of the Carter administration and the appointment of HUD Secretary Patricia Roberts Harris, we had looked forward to a new HUD policy responsive to Indian people and a new emphasis on adequate delivery of Indian housing.

In a letter to the Secretary immediately after her appointment, UIPA urged an emphasis on the creation of a better delivery system, the consolidation of HUD Indian programs under one Indian office and the appointment of an Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. Other Indian organizations have repeatedly made those and similar requests, but we have observed no movement at

HUD toward the facilitation of those requests.

Moreover, recent developments at the Department of Housing and Urban Development are disturbing.

The one office which has dealt directly with Indian people and the office which Indian people generally think of as the "HUD Indian Desk," is the Office of Indian Policy and Programs, who director dealt directly with the Assistant Secretary for Consumers Affairs and Regulatory Functions.

Although the director (most recently Reaves F. Nahwooksy) was sometimes subject to criticism from Indian country, it was understood that nearly everything accomplished within HUD for Indian people, in some way was affected by that special assistant for Indian affairs.

But it was also understood that the "Indian Desk" did not have programmatic decision-making authority and served only as an advisory body. That office was only one of eight dealing with various aspect of Indian housing within the HUD central office.

Indian country has long told HUD officials that the fragmentation of Indian programs within HUD must be ended and that there should be one Indian housing office to handle all HUD Indian matters. The obvious place for Indian housing seems to be within the Office of Indian Policy and Programs, the only office dealing full-time with Indian problems and headed by an Indian individual. The question, however, has not been the personalities who would fill that office, but the consolidation of all programs into one

office and the elevation of that office to an office with the status and decision-making authority to finally facilitate the adequate delivery of Indian housing.

Rather than moving toward a positive response to Indian requests, and strengthening the Office of Indian Policy and Programs, HUD administration has "reorganized" that office, taking it out from Consumer Affairs (where the Indian director related directly to an assistant secretary) and placing it under a director of Voluntary Associations and Special Programs, who relates to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Neighborhoods and Consumer Affairs, who in turn relates to the Assistant Secretary for Neighborhoods, Voluntary Programs and Consumer Protection. The move ends the former direct tie between the director of Indian programs and the Office of Assistant Secretary, placing still more steps between the Indian director and the Secretary. The re-organization appears to be a direct demotion of the Office of Indian Policy and Programs and a blow to Indian people, which will serve to further hinder the progress of providing housing. (It is important to note that the re-organization, which affected Indian programs, was accomplished with no input from the Office of Indian Policy and Programs.)

As well as the demotion of the Office of Indian Planning and Programs, the Secretary has asked Joseph Burstein, a long-time HUD legal counsel, to "head up" Indian programs. He has said he will be studying problems of Indian housing and making proposals for the solutions of those problems. The week of May 16, Burstein told representatives from national Indian organizations that there has been "no such thing as an Indian Desk at HUD" in recent years and that he is currently in charge of Indian programs until a new re-organizational plan is finalized. UIPA repeatedly attempted to reach Burstein to ask if a time frame has been set for the completion of the new plan, but Burstein was not available to answer our questions.

Secretary Harris is to be complimented for her efforts to adopt a new plan for working with Indian housing. But it is to be noted that study after study on Indian housing has

been completed, including a 1975 Secretary-appointed task force study, a lengthy 1971 General Accounting Office report and the housing section of the Final Report of the American Indian Policy Review Commission. All deplored the existing conditions of Indian housing and made lengthy recommendations that have been repeated by tribes, housing authorities and other Indian and non-Indian groups.

Reportedly the Ralph Nadar Center for the Study of Responsive Law, Housing Research Group, is in process of compiling a report, which is highly critical of HUD's Indian housing program and calls for the centralization of Indian programs within HUD and the employment of a larger number of American Indians to work within HUD's Indian housing programs.

That group is also supporting the Indian and Alaska Native Housing and Community Development Act, (S-1287), introduced by Senator Mike Gravel (D-Alaska), which calls for Congressional action to provide "decent, safe and sanitary housing for all Indians and Alaska Natives." The act also provides for the creation of an assistant secretary to head an Office of Indian and Alaska Native Housing.

Congressman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) has introduced a companion bill, H.R. 7163, which is identical to the Gravel bill. Additionally, the bill has been submitted as Amendment 312 to the Housing and Community Development Act of 1977, S. 1523. That bill and the included amendment are slated to be heard on the Senate floor June 6, more quickly than the original Senate bill could have been considered. The amendment is co-sponsored by Senators Birch Bayh and Hubert Humphrey.

UIPA is convinced that the matter of providing adequate Indian housing is a most urgent one and we urge our planners and others to contact President Carter, Secretary Harris and Congressional representatives to express your views on what HUD's priorities should be for Indian housing and on the Congressional bill concerning housing.

LETS GET CRIMINALS CONT'D.

What then is the solution? It seems to me that first we need to amend the Navajo Tribal Code and, in particular, S561 of Title 17 to remove the word "Indian" and replace it with the word "person" and define "person" to include corporations and partnerships, as well as an individual. With this change, we will be able to prosecute the real criminals, those who sell alcohol to our people.

I am also directing our Legal Department to examine the Public Nuisance Law, and, in particular, that of the State of New Mexico, and draft an appropriate resolution for the Navajo Nation which will en-

able us to take both civil, as well as criminal, action against all persons who sell alcoholic beverages in Navajo Indian Country.

We must always keep in mind the first rule of medicine - "primum non nocere" - first to do no harm. Let us deal with the problem of alcoholism by punishing the criminals and not the victims.

While I strongly urge our people not to patronize those establishments selling alcoholic beverages within Navajo Indian Country in violation of Navajo and Federal law, I do not think the answer is to arrest our people who are driven by a disease they cannot control.



After the presentation of a check from the Lions Club by Larry Bourland and Andy Lucas, Andy treated the Simnasho students to his

rendition of "Little Grass Shack." The kids, in turn, sang a song for Andy.

(Sandy Rangila Photo)



Grade school principal Tony Miller was pretty proud of the four students who had perfect attendance this year. He presented certificates to Deanie Smith, Brigitte Scott, Rosanna Sanders and Jamie Smith at the

awards assembly on the last day of school, June 8. Many other awards were given in athletics, reading, chess, spelling and bus monitoring.

CDS Photo