

# Diplomats Join Residents in Awaiting Action on Racial Bias

**By JOHN PIERSON**  
 United Press International  
 Washington—(UPI)—Hundreds of African diplomats and thousands of Washington Negroes are waiting to see what will come of the latest assault on racial bias in the nation's capital.

This time the attack has been mounted against housing bias which has caused deep embarrassment to President Kennedy and the state department in relations with many African nations.

The three commissioners of the District of Columbia, who comprise the executive branch of the local government, have decided the time has come for a ban on racial discrimination in housing. But since Congress, which in effect is Washington's city council, has final legislative authority, the commissioners have deferred their ban to give Congress itself time to act.

But Congress, divided as it is between liberals and southern conservatives, may not be able to take any action. In that case, the bill will be back with the commissioners, who can be expected to run with it, but possibly at their own peril.

That is because the House district committee, which is dominated by southerners, has already indicated how little it likes the proposed ban. And the committee, with life-and-death power over district legislation, can make things uncomfortable for the commissioners, who must come to it each year for every kind of favor.

So a battle is shaping up. And among the most interested spectators is the state department, which feels, in the words of one of its officials, that the United States "cannot conduct effective foreign relations when, on the basis of color alone, representatives of other nations, along with our own citizens, are denied suitable housing in Washington."

Sentiment for the ban built up last spring when the U.S. commission on civil rights held hearings. The commission heard 40 witnesses, including four from the department of state.

Pedro A. Sajnuan, the department's assistant chief of protocol, reported on a canvass made in 1961 of 211 luxury apartments in northwest Washington. Only eight would accept African diplomats as tenants. A year later,

a second survey showed even more resistance.

This sort of discrimination the department felt, is a painful thorn in the side of United States foreign relations.

One African ambassador, after having a door slammed in his face and being told "We don't take any Negroes" informed the department that he felt his time in Washington was going to be "completely wasted."

When the hearings were over, the civil rights commission recommended that the district commissioners issue a regulation prohibiting racial discrimination in sale, rental or financing of housing.

The commissioners asked their legal department whether they had such authority. The corporation counsel advised they did under an 1892 Congressional resolution which authorized them to pass regulations to protect the "lives, limbs, health, comfort and quiet" of District residents as well as their property.

But in order to enforce a ban, the council pointed out, the commissioners would have to find that housing bias threatened lives, limbs, and so forth.

Last fall the commissioners held their own hearings and directed their staff to do a statistical study of housing. As a result, late in March, the commissioners found not only what the civil rights commission had found the previous spring—namely, that there is widespread discrimination in housing—but also that this discrimination hurts.

**Negroes Pay More**  
 It hurts, the commissioners found, because Negroes are forced to pay more for poorer housing than whites. It hurts because whites see their property values fall under Negro block-busting practices.

Finally, the commissioners found that housing bias hurts because it fosters ghettos and ghettos lead to slums. And slums, in turn, promote illegitimacy, lack of prenatal care, infant mortality, tuberculosis, juvenile delinquency and venereal disease.

The commissioners concluded that they had authority to issue a ban. They would have done so had not Congress been about to begin hearings on the subject.

At the hearings March 28, commission president Walter N. Tobriner made it plain that he and his colleagues would not hold off forever. If Congress does not "occupy the field," he said, "We would expect to go forward with the regulations."

To "occupy the field," Tobriner explained, "Congress could either pass its own ban on housing discrimination or could pass a law forbidding the commissioners to impose their ban. Congressional failure to act, he said, "would really be a sanction for the commissioners to go ahead."

**Ban Extensive**  
 The proposed ban would extend to all forms of housing, public and private, and would cover all transactions, including sale, lease, rental and finance. It would prohibit discrimination by owners, real estate agents and bankers. It would even forbid newspapers to mention race in their want ads.

There would be two exceptions. The owner of a two-family house, if he lived in half of it, could still discriminate in his choice of a tenant for the other half. So could someone who rented out an apartment or a room in his own one-family house.

In coverage, then, the commissioners' ban would be as strict as the one Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller last month signed into law in New York State. It would resemble the anti-bias statutes of 16 other states and New York City.

Members of the house subcommittee wasted no time in saying what they thought of the commissioners' proposal. Rep. John L. McMillan, (D-S.C.), chairman of the full committee, said: "We feel this proposed regulation is going too far in connection with private property."

Rep. Joel T. Brodyhill (R-Va.) said that in his years as a real estate man he had found many persons who, while having no racial prejudice, just had "their own peculiarity and reason for wanting to sell to some persons and not to others."

committee, has promised more hearings on the bill, which has now been introduced by Rep. Abraham J. Multer, (D-N.Y.) but after the March 28 session, it seems unlikely the district committee will report a bill of the sort the commissioners propose.

As Tobriner pointed out, however, Congress might act by forbidding the commissioners to act. But the chance of this seems equally slim. A number of liberal senators and representatives say they would oppose the move.

This group includes Sens. Wayne Morse, (D-Ore.), Jacob K. Javits, (R-N.Y.), and Joseph S. Clark, (D-PA.), and Rep. Henry S. Reuss, (D-Wis.), Edith Green, (D-Ore.) and Frank Thompson, (D-N.J.).

Morse, a member of the senate district committee, summed up the mood of the liberals when he said he would "strongly and vigorously" fight an attempt by Congress to keep the commissioners from acting. Javits urged the commissioners

not to wait for Congress but to go ahead with their ban.

Moreover, a bill forbidding the commissioners to act would face a presidential veto. President Kennedy has made it plain that he wants an end to housing discrimination in Washington and elsewhere.

There is a third way Congress might act. Those who regard the commissioners' proposal as extreme might sponsor an innocuous measure "to occupy the field" for Con-

gress and thus effectively exclude the commissioners.

But this, too, seems unlikely to happen. First, no matter how innocuous the measure, Southern congressmen might have difficulty explaining to their constituents why they voted for any civil rights measure. Second, the Southerners on the district committee would be reluctant to report out even a bland bill which, once on the floor, would be subject to amendment by the liberals.

Thus the outlook is for

no action by Congress. The next question: How long will the district commissioners wait before proceeding to enact their ban?

Tobriner said they will give Congress "a reasonable opportunity" to consider a bill. This might mean that if Congress fails to act, the commissioners will move next winter, after the current session is recessed. But whenever they move, it probably will be with some apprehension about how the house district committee will react.

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### Associate Professor Named at University

Eugene — Dr. Stuart Rich, assistant professor in the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration, has been appointed an associate professor of marketing in the School of Business Administration at the University of Oregon.

The appointment, which is effective Sept. 1, is subject to confirmation by the state board of higher education.

Rich, a graduate of Wabash college, received his doctor of business administration degree from Harvard university in 1960. He is a member of Phi Beta Kappa, national scholastic honorary.

### What Now for Dr. Sam Sheppard?



This famous convict seemed likely to win parole until a beautiful blonde fell in love with him; now people ask again: is he a victim of fate or his own emotions?

Lawyer-reporter Paul Holmes tries to answer in the **JUNE 2ND** Weekend Issue of **Family Weekly** with your copy of the **MEDFORD MAIL TRIBUNE**

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