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HARTFORD RULING - NEW JERSEY

Q: A Federal judge in Hartford, Connecticut, recently ruled that Federal grants to parks and other community facilities in suburban areas should cease unless those areas were accessible to members of urban minorities. This seems to set a precedent. Do you agree with the decision and will you see that Federal agencies comply with it?

A: As I understand the Hartford case, it addressed the legality of the Community Development Block Grant applications of seven suburban communities around Hartford. The District Court ruled that the applications were illegal because they didn't address the housing needs of low-income people who work in the communities.

The District Court's decision, like the Supreme Court's decision in the Gautreaux case, provides remedies for the jurisdictions in question in terms of existing laws like the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

The 1974 Act does not compel a community to provide for low-income housing, but it does require that communities which accept Federal funds like Community Development Block Grants, address the housing needs of low-income people and fully comply with civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination.

I have stated before that I will enforce the law in this matter.

BACKGROUND

On January 28, 1976, a decision of the United States District Court found HUD's approval of block grant applications for seven suburbs of Hartford to be illegal. The City of Hartford brought suit against the suburbs for failure to provide a completed Housing Assistance Plan as part of their block grant application, under the terms of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974.

HUD had allowed the original applications because the suburbs in question had pleaded difficulties in the preparation of their Housing Assistance Plans for the first year of Community Development Block Grant allocations. Subsequently, HUD has altered its regulations for the second year of block grant applications - a revision which in the opinion of the agency moots the Hartford decision.

Of the seven suburbs involved in the case, one has opted not to re-apply for Community Development Block Grants, three are appealing the court's decision and the remainder apparently are attempting to develop block grant applications under the new guidelines.

FLM
6/2/76

ETHNIC PURITY - NEW JERSEY

Q: Could you elaborate on your views, as first expressed in the Rose Garden news conference with the American Society of Newspaper Editors, on what role the Federal and State governments should play in opening up suburbs or racially restricted areas of cities to member of minority groups and specifically to blacks.

A: I stated at that time that I supported existing Federal housing laws. The Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, the first law that I signed when I took office, provides for greater participation by State and local governments in the use of Federal funds for housing and urban needs.

The law also provides, however, that communities which apply for Federal Community Development Block Grants must provide a housing assistance plan for low-income people residing in the community or expected to reside, which complies with civil rights legislation and provides adequate citizen participation.

Another part of the law, Section 8, provides direct cash assistance for lower-income families to meet their housing needs. This provision avoids the massive housing projects that characterized former Federal public housing programs, which antagonized many suburban communities.

Taken together, the various provisions of the 1974 Act provide a sensible and flexible guideline for the interaction of Federal, State and local governments in the matter of low-income housing.

FLM
6/2/76

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NEW JERSEY I-287

Question

Mr. President, what is your position on the completion of I-287 in New Jersey?

Answer

Once interstate highway segments satisfy certain minimal Federal requirements, decisions concerning construction are left up to the individual states and their local governments. I-287 was originally planned to funnel traffic around more congested areas of Northern New Jersey and New York City. I have learned, however, that since these plans were formulated, state and local priorities may have changed. Final decision on the construction of this highway rests with the State of New Jersey, which must allocate the actual construction funds out of their apportioned share of Federal Highway dollars.

BACKGROUND

Governor Byrne's position on the completion of this highway segment is not clear. The purpose of I-287, a 20 mile segment which would link the Garden State Parkway, I-80 and I-78 (coming west from the New York State Thruway), was to by-pass heavily populated areas.

In November, 1975 there was a public hearing on selecting a corridor for the road. This was followed by a 90-day public review and comment period. There has been some consideration of withdrawing the route -- but New Jersey has decided to proceed and to finalize the Environmental Impact Statement, in order to take another look at the environmental impact of this highway. The cost of completing I-287 is estimated at \$256 million.

JRH
6/2/76