

The original documents are located in Box 2, folder “10/18/76 - Women in Housing Conference, Albuquerque” of the Carla A. Hills Speeches at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Gerald Ford donated to the United States of America his copyrights in all of his unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

FINAL 10

WOMEN IN HOUSING CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 18, 1976

FIRST, I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR INVITING ME TO THIS IMPORTANT CONFERENCE WHOSE REASON FOR BEING IS STEEPED IN PRINCIPLES THAT HAVE BEEN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO ME FOR MANY YEARS -- ANTEDATING MY APPOINTMENT TO HUD.

AND, I ESPECIALLY WANT TO THANK MY GOOD FRIEND SENATOR PETE DOMENICI FOR PERSUADING ME TO VISIT ALBUQUERQUE TO SPEAK TO THE WOMEN IN HOUSING CONFERENCE. AS A FORMER MAYOR, THE SENATOR IS ONE WHOSE ADVICE AND COUNSEL I PARTICULARLY VALUE. AND HE CERTAINLY WAS RIGHT ABOUT YOUR DEDICATION AND ENTHUSIASM.

I SUPPOSE EVERY WOMAN WHO WORKS IN THE INTEREST OF WOMEN'S ADVANCEMENT HAS HER OWN FAVORITE STORY OF ABSURD DISCRIMINATION. AS A LAWYER, MY PRIZE GOES TO THE CASE OF BRADWELL V. THE STATE OF ILLINOIS A CENTURY AGO (83 U.S. 677 -- 1873) -- IN WHICH THE SUPREME COURT UPHELD ILLINOIS' POWER TO PREVENT MYRA COLBY BRADWELL FROM PRACTICING LAW BECAUSE SHE WAS A WOMAN.



A STATEMENT IN THE CONCURRING OPINION IS WORTHY OF BEING HAND-STITCHED ON AN OLD SITTING-ROOM SAMPLER. JUSTICE BRADLEY SAID:

"THE NATURAL AND PROPER TIMIDITY AND DELICACY WHICH BELONGS TO THE FEMALE SEX EVIDENTLY UNFITS IT FOR MANY OF THE OCCUPATIONS OF CIVIL LIFE."

HE SAID "EVIDENTLY". EVIDENTLY THE LEARNED JUSTICE FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THAT AT THE VERY TIME HE WAS WRITING, THE MOST POWERFUL RULER IN THE WESTERN WORLD WAS A FEMALE NAMED VICTORIA. HER "TIMIDITY AND DELICACY" IN CIVIL AFFAIRS MAY WELL HAVE BEEN DEVOUTLY WISHED FOR BY THE SUCCESSION OF SIX PRIME MINISTERS WHO SERVED UNDER HER 64-YEAR REIGN.

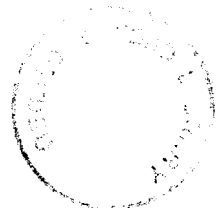
BUT, AS WE KNOW, THERE ARE MANY MYTHS ABOUT THE "PROPER" ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY -- AND MANY OF THEM PERSIST TODAY.

IN THE AREA OF HOUSING -- PARTICULARLY IN SECURING MORTGAGES -- WOMEN ARE STILL FIGHTING OLD PREJUDICES IN SPITE OF LAWS AND SUPPORTING STATISTICS WHICH MAKE SUCH DISCRIMINATION BOTH UNLAWFUL AND UNFOUNDED. I WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT SOME OF THOSE THINGS.

BUT, IN DISCUSSING THE ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN THE HOUSING MARKET, WE CANNOT IGNORE THE STATE OF THE GENERAL ECONOMY WHICH AFFECTS THE ABILITY OF ANY PERSON TO BUY OR RENT A HOME,

FOR, PRESUMING THAT WE SUCCEED IN ELIMINATING THE LAST VESTIGES OF SEX DISCRIMINATION, IT WILL BE A HOLLOW VICTORY IF WE DO NOT ALSO SUCCEED IN CONTROLLING INFLATION WHICH DISCRIMINATES ABSOLUTELY AGAINST ALL PEOPLE.

SO, LET US BEGIN BY TAKING STOCK.



NONE OF US CAN FORGET THAT IN 1975, THE MAJOR QUESTION-MARK WAS WHETHER OUR NATIONAL ECONOMY WOULD SUSTAIN THE FORWARD MOMENTUM WHICH WAS THEN ON THE CUSP OF A POSITIVE TURN-AROUND -- FROM THE BLEAK AND DEPRESSING 12-MONTH PERIOD OF A TERRIFYING RECESSION COMPOUNDED BY AN UNCEASING INCREASE IN THE COST OF EVERYTHING.

INFLATION STOOD AT 12-14 PERCENT. THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE WAS ABOUT 9 PERCENT.

URBAN REVENUES WERE WAY DOWN. NEW YORK WAS ON THE BRINK OF FINANCIAL FAILURE. INDUSTRY WAS DEPRESSED AND THE HOUSING SECTOR WAS SUFFERING ITS WORST YEAR IN THREE DECADES.

ON CAPITOL HILL, LABOR AND POLITICAL LEADERS WERE PROPHECIZING A NATIONAL COLLAPSE UNLESS WE ENGAGED IN MASSIVE FEDERAL SPENDING -- IN THE FORM OF SUBSIDIES -- PARTICULARLY IN THE HOUSING INDUSTRY. WE DID NOT SUCCUMB TO THAT TEMPTATION.

SO, HERE WE ARE -- ONE YEAR LATER.

THE NATION AND ITS ECONOMY SURVIVED -- AND THE DELICATE HEALTH OF THE ECONOMIC UPTURN, WHICH WE WATCHED SO FRETFULLY A YEAR AGO, HAS BECOME STRONGER AND STRONGER WITH EACH PASSING MONTH.

IN ONE SHORT YEAR WE HAVE SEEN:

PERSONAL INCOME JUMP \$83 BILLION; -- OUR GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT GROW BY \$200 BILLION; RETAIL SALES INCREASE 16 PERCENT; GENERAL MERCHANDISE 11 PERCENT; -- NEW FACTORY ORDERS UP \$17 BILLION.

TODAY, THERE ARE THREE MILLION MORE AMERICANS WORKING THAN ONE YEAR AGO -- IN SPITE OF A TREMENDOUS INFLUX OF WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE INTO THE LABOR MARKET.

INFLATION HAS BEEN MORE THAN CUT IN HALF.

IN HOUSING -- PERHAPS THE HARDEST HIT SECTOR OF OUR ENTIRE ECONOMY -- NEW STARTS ARE UP 22 PERCENT OVER LAST AUGUST, AND 64 PERCENT OVER THE BEGINNING OF 1975.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?



WE HAVE COME THIS FAR, NOT THROUGH THE MAGIC OF A BIG FEDERAL GOVERNMENT "SAVE", BUT THROUGH STRONG, PRAGMATIC, AND CONSISTENT ECONOMIC POLICIES.

AND OUR PROSPECTS FOR CONTINUED GROWTH AND PROGRESS DEPEND ON MAINTAINING THAT STEADY COURSE.

WHAT WORRIES ME ARE THE REPEATED CALLS FOR MORE GOVERNMENT SPENDING PROGRAMS.

IF WE ARE PERSUADED BY THE PROPOSALS THAT WOULD ADD \$100 TO \$200 BILLION TO A BUDGET THAT IS ALREADY PRODUCING A DEFICIT OF OVER \$50 BILLION, THEN WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT THE "MAGIC" OF THE FEDERAL PURSE HAS MORE PULLING POWER THAN OUR GREAT FREE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM.

THE UNVARNISHED EVIDENCE IS THAT THESE BIG SPENDING PROGRAMS THWART NEEDED BUSINESS EXPANSION BY DRIVING UP COSTS OF DOING BUSINESS.

THAT HURTS THE VERY PEOPLE SUCH PROGRAMS WERE SUPPOSED TO HELP -- WITH GREATER EXPENSES, EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTION, LAY-OFFS AND STILL ANOTHER ROUND OF UNEMPLOYMENT CHECKS.

IN THE HOUSING AREA I AM VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CALLS FOR THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO SUBSIDIZE THE BUILDING OF 2-1/2 MILLION HOUSING UNITS A YEAR.

THE FACT IS THAT THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE SUFFERED IN HOUSING OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS WERE CAUSED IN LARGE MEASURE BY THAT VERY PHILOSOPHY WHICH WAS MANDATED BY THE HOUSING ACT OF 1968.

FOR PURSUANT TO THAT ACT, THIS NATION SUBSIDIZED, ANNUALLY, MORE THAN 2 MILLION HOUSING STARTS FOR THREE YEARS RUNNING -- AND GENERATED A BURST OF HOUSING OVER-PRODUCTION THAT WE ARE JUST NOW WORKING OFF.

IN THE COURSE OF THIS PRODUCTION EXPLOSION OUR NATION ABANDONED THOUSANDS OF SOUND, WELL-DESIGNED HOMES IN OUR CITIES AND UNDER-UTILIZED ROADS, UTILITIES, AND SEWAGE SYSTEMS ALREADY IN PLACE THERE, AS BUYERS HEEDED THE PIED PIPER CALL OF "NEW IS BETTER". NEIGHBORHOODS ALL ACROSS THIS NATION WERE BLIGHTED WITH ROW UPON ROW OF BOARDED-UP HOUSES LEFT TO DECAY, THE MOST FREQUENTLY CITED SYMPTOM OF THE ILLNESS IN OUR CITIES.

BUT IT WAS NOT ONLY OUR CITIES THAT SUFFERED -- OUR HOUSING INDUSTRY -- MANAGEMENT AND LABOR -- WAS INCAPACITATED. BECAUSE AN ARTIFICIALLY PRODUCED "BOOM" CANNOT CONTINUE FOREVER, THE NEXT PERIOD, WHICH HIT US ABOUT TWO YEARS AGO, WAS ONE OF EXAGGERATED CONTRACTION TO ENABLE US TO WORK OFF EXCESSIVE INVENTORIES WITH THE RESULTING LAY-OFFS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

OUR POLICIES OVER THE PAST 18 MONTHS HAVE TRIED TO ACCOMMODATE THE LOGICAL CALL FOR REASONABLE LEVELS OF STARTS WHILE AVOIDING THE DISASTEROUS CYCLES OF ALL OR NOTHING THAT HAVE CHARACTERIZED THE HOUSING CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY.

THESE POLICIES HAVE WORKED. EVEN IF WE FAIL TO BUILD ANOTHER HOUSE IN 1976, THIS YEAR -- WILL BE THE FOURTH BEST YEAR ON RECORD FOR NEW FAMILY STARTS. AND MULTI-FAMILY STARTS, ALTHOUGH NOT SO QUICK TO RECOVER, JUMPED 48 PERCENT LAST MONTH WITH A SUBSTANTIAL JUMP IN PERMITS SO THAT WE HAVE EVERY REASON TO BE CONFIDENT OF THEIR CONTINUED GAIN.

RATHER THAN RE-CREATE MASSIVE SUBSIDY PROGRAMS WHICH TOO OFTEN FORCE TAXPAYERS TO SUBSIDIZE THEIR ECONOMIC PEERS, HUD HAS SUPPORTED THREE INITIATIVES TO EXPAND THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOMEOWNERSHIP.

THE FIRST IS TO LOWER DOWNPAYMENTS FOR THOSE WHO BUY HOMES WITH FHA INSURANCE. FOR THE TYPICALLY-PRICED NEW HOME, THE INITIATIVE WILL CUT THE DOWNPAYMENT IN HALF, THUS HELPING FAMILIES -- PARTICULARLY YOUNG FAMILIES WHO ARE BUYING THEIR FIRST HOMES -- TO GAIN THE PRACTICAL AND PERSONAL BENEFITS OF HOMEOWNERSHIP.

THE SECOND IS TO EXPAND FHA MORTGAGE LIMITS TO COVER ABOUT 87 PERCENT OF SALES.

AND THE THIRD IS TO PROVIDE A FEDERAL GUARANTEE OF A GRADUATED PAYMENT MORTGAGE, WHICH ALLOWS YOUNG FAMILIES TO REDUCE THEIR MONTHLY PAYMENTS IN THE EARLY YEARS WHEN THEIR INCOMES ARE LIKELY TO BE LOWER. THE PAYMENTS INCREASE MODERATELY IN LATER YEARS WHEN THEIR INCOMES ARE EXPECTED TO RISE.

IN THE 1930'S AND 40'S THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT REVOLUTIONIZED HOME PURCHASING BY INTRODUCING THE 30-YEAR FULLY-AMORTIZED LOAN WITH A 10 TO 20 PERCENT DOWNPAYMENT. YOU MAY RECALL THAT IN 1930, THE TRADITIONAL MORTGAGE WAS FOR 5-YEARS WITH A 50 PERCENT DOWNPAYMENT.

WE CAN CHANGE THE MARKET IN A SIMILAR WAY IN THE 1970'S. THESE PROPOSALS ARE NOT BASED ON SUBSIDIES PAID FOR WITH TAX DOLLARS -- THEY ARE INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR HELPING FAMILIES TO PAY FOR THEIR OWN HOMES.

BUT NO AMOUNT OF INNOVATION WILL WORK IF AMERICANS DO NOT HAVE THE SPENDABLE INCOME TO MAKE THE DOWNPAYMENT AND TO PAY THE MORTGAGE, UTILITIES AND MAINTENANCE.

THE WOMAN WHO HEADS A HOUSEHOLD DOESN'T HAVE TO BE TOLD WHAT INFLATION DOES TO HER SALARY. THE WORKING SINGLE WOMAN KNOWS WHAT HER SLIM PAY CHECK WILL LOOK LIKE IF TAXES ARE HIKED.

LAW, OR NO LAW, WHAT WOMEN HAVE TO CONTEND WITH IN BUYING OR RENTING A HOME IS THE "BOTTOM LINE" -- KNOWN IN FINANCIAL CIRCLES AS "MONEY".

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, AND WE CONTINUE TO PROVE THAT WE ARE EXCELLENT HOUSING RISKS.

IN THE LAST TEN YEARS PARTICIPATION BY WOMEN IN THE NATION'S LABOR FORCE HAS INCREASED MARKEDLY -- 14 PERCENT IN THE 20-34 YEAR-OLD BRACKET, AND 9 PERCENT IN THE 35-44 YEAR GROUP.

IN 1974, WOMEN ADDED OVER ONE MILLION WORKERS TO THE LABOR FORCE -- THUS SHOWING CONTINUED EXPANSION OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EVEN IN A POOR ECONOMIC YEAR.

MEANWHILE, THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1974 -- WHICH WE ADMINISTER AT HUD -- AMENDED TITLE VIII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1968 TO PROHIBIT SEX DISCRIMINATION IN THE SALE OR RENTAL OF HOUSING.

IN ADDITION TO PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATORY FINANCING, ADVERTISING AND BLOCKBUSTING, THE AMENDMENT ALSO DIRECTS HUD TO CONDUCT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAMS TO FURTHER THE TITLE'S PURPOSE. THIS MAKES HUD THE LEADING ADVOCATE OF FAIR HOUSING IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH.

TO CARRY OUT THIS ROLE, WE ARE SEEKING STRONGER ENFORCEMENT POWERS. AFTER STUDYING THE PROBLEM, WE HAVE CONCLUDED THAT HUD -- RATHER THAN BEING LIMITED TO CONCILIATION AND PERSUASION -- SHOULD BE EMPOWERED TO BRING A CIVIL ACTION, WHICH WE THINK WOULD MAKE PERSUASION A LOT MORE PERSUASIVE.

TO PARAPHRASE FROM TEDDY ROOSEVELT: IT IS ALWAYS EASIER TO TALK MORE SOFTLY IF YOU ARE CARRYING A BIG STICK. IN FACT, WHEN YOU ARE CARRYING THAT STICK, YOU SOMETIMES DON'T EVEN HAVE TO TALK.

BUT REASONED TALK HAS ITS PLACE.

SO, TWO YEARS AGO (JUNE, 1974), HUD CONTRACTED WITH A PRIVATE ACTUARIAL FIRM (KETRON, INC.) TO DEVELOP TABLES ON THE RELATIVE INCOME STABILITY OF WOMEN AS BORROWERS OR CO-BORROWERS DURING THE CRITICAL RISK YEARS OF A MORTGAGE.

WE RELEASED THE FINDINGS LAST MARCH IN A REPORT ENTITLED "WOMEN IN THE MORTGAGE MARKET", WHICH CONCLUSIVELY SUPPORTS THE ECONOMICS OF MAKING LOANS TO WOMEN.

PROJECTED INCOMES FOR WOMEN RUN WELL ABOVE MORTGAGE
· BANKER ESTIMATES.

THE FINDINGS PUT TO REST THE OLDEST OF MYTHS ABOUT
WOMEN'S UNSTABLE INCOMES. FOR THE FACT IS THE CREDIT
WORTHINESS OF WOMEN HAS STATISTICALLY PROVEN TO BE NEARLY
ON A PAR WITH MEN OF COMPARABLE INCOMES.

THUS, WE HAVE THE AMMUNITION NEEDED TO CONSOLIDATE
THE LEGAL GAINS OF WOMEN IN THE PRACTICAL ARENA OF THE
HOUSING MARKETPLACE.

CERTAINLY, ALL OF US KNOW THAT WE STILL HAVE A DISTANCE
TO TRAVEL TO REACH ECONOMIC EQUALITY.

BUT, I SUGGEST THAT AS WE CONSOLIDATE OUR GAINS -- BOTH
THROUGH THE LAWS OF OUR LAND AND THE ECONOMIC REALITIES OF
OUR GROWING EARNING POWER -- WE MUST BECOME EVER MORE INVOLVED
IN THE REALITIES OF THE GENERAL ECONOMY,

MY GOOD FRIEND, BILL COLEMAN (SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION) TOLD A GROUP AT A RECENT NAACP CONFERENCE THAT HE WANTED NO PART OF ANY MOVEMENT THAT WOULD CHANGE THE AMERICAN SYSTEM. AS HE SAID: "ALL OF US HAVE WORKED TOO HARD TO GET INTO THE SYSTEM, AND WE SHOULD MAKE DARNED SURE NOBODY GOES AND CHANGES IT ON US."

I SAY: WOMEN HAVE WORKED TOO HARD TO GET INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF AMERICAN ECONOMIC LIFE, AND WE HAVE TO MAKE (DARNED) SURE THAT NOBODY DIVERTS THAT STREAM. THAT MEANS: WE NEED TO WORK WITH OUR PRIVATE ENTERPRISE SYSTEM.

THANK YOU.