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WCCO

*Housing Speech
Tues June 25*

[1946]

FELLOW CITIZENS:

Tonight I want to talk to you about the critical housing problem facing the state of Minnesota. I don't have to tell any of you how serious this problem is--you all know that. My office in Minneapolis is beseiged daily by dozens of persons--mostly ex-servicemen--desperately searching for some place to live. The same misery and gloom which I see every day in Minneapolis is repeated throughout the state. Families are taking shelter **wh̄erever** they can find it, in automobiles, in unheated buildings, in empty business quarters, and in places totally unfit for human habitation. Thousands of families have doubled and tripled up so that twelve to fourteen people living in a 3-room apartment is a condition familiar to all of us.

Such unfortunate living conditions carry with them serious social results. Already we read statistics pointing to the high divorce rate among not only our **so-called** war marriages, but through the population at large. I don't hesitate to predict that the divorce rate will double or even triple unless married couples are able to find a decent place to live, with at least some privacy. Many, many veterans have spoken to me in the bitterest vein as to how they had dreamed and planned while overseas of a nice apartment or little house for their family, and then on their return home how they found themselves forced to double up or to live like an animal or perhaps to remain **separated** from wife and family. To be frank, I marvel at the patience of these men who have been promised so much, but have received **so**

little. Lest their patience run short, we must bend all our efforts to help them in their search for decent housing. Let us all realize that this problem is our problem. Let us not forget that we live in a democracy, and that when the people speak with one voice, we can get action. Therefore, I want to urge on each of you real thought and real effort to solve this problem. The same bold approach and driving teamwork that produced 100,000 airplanes a year during the war emergency can solve the present housing crisis.

Let us examine some of the measures now under way and see how each of us, individually, can help. The goal of the Veterans Emergency Program of the Federal Government, headed by Wilson Wyatt, is 2,700,000 new homes and apartments for veterans in 1946 and 1947. This is a big goal, far greater than any past housing production rate. Nevertheless, it can and must be done. The Wyatt program is an emergency program geared to get into full production all **building** materials, to ferret out new sources of supply and to guarantee the existence of an adequate supply of skilled workmen. This emergency program will work through priorities, allocations, financial aid, and other needed assistance so as to stimulate present builders and to attract others into the field. Building is to be channeled into the low price home and the low rent apartment that most American families must have. Also, through guaranteed markets, priorities, and financing aids, conventional building will be supplemented by the production of prefabricated houses. Full production of prefabricated homes is necessary to reach the annual building rate goal of 1,500,000 homes and apartments.

The necessary legislation for this program has been passed by the Congress. The program is now moving into high gear and soon we will begin to see results. You and I as citizens, and millions like us throughout the country, demanded and got the Wyatt program. Continued vigilance on our part is essential to its success. At present, shortages of building supplies present a serious bottleneck. It is the responsibility of each of us to bring pressure to bear in every case of hoarding and of waste or unauthorized use of priority materials that we can discover. Unessential home improvements and unessential commercial building must both be stamped out. We as citizens must insist that it be done. In addition, vigorous local campaigns are needed to speed up local building permit and inspection machinery, and to open up new areas for moderate and low cost home construction. Each local community must be set to build, and to build fast, once materials are available.

The Wyatt program we have so far discussed is merely an emergency program. It will not solve the long run needs of this state, or of the nation.

A real start toward the long range housing program this country urgently needs is found in the Wagner Ellender Taft bill. The passage of this bill will make certain, immediate strides towards the goal of a well housed state and nation.

Today there are throughout the United States over ten million slum flats and sub-standard shacks. That is the magnitude of the challenge which faces us. Together we brought about the passage of the Wyatt program by Congress. The same type of unified effort must be had so that the Wagner Ellender Taft bill can be enacted into law. There is no conflict between the emergency measures of the Wyatt program and the long range program provided for in the Wagner Ellender Taft bill. On the contrary, both are integral elements of the housing program for the nation. If we are to reach our goal for 1946 and 1947, we must have the passage of the Wagner Ellender Taft bill.

This bill will provide the necessary machinery to finance sound private housing for the mass housing market at the kind of prices and rents which most of our citizens can pay. It is a non-partisan bill, as you can see from the sponsors, and one which represents the best thought of housing experts throughout the country.

In a recent letter to all congressmen and senators, I outlined briefly the reasons why I considered the Wagner Ellender Taft bill essential. Some of the reasons I listed in that letter are as follows:

1. It recognizes that there are different income groups in the nation and that different housing problems face each group.
2. It attempts to stimulate private industry rather than supplant it; yet at the same time it recognizes that, unaided, private enterprise ~~cannot~~ ^{cannot} meet the needs of many of our people.
3. It includes a public housing program for both city and farm communities.
4. It devotes special emphasis to the housing problem of the veterans and their families.
5. It sets up a single national housing administration to give unity to whatever the government may do in the housing field. I know you recognize that such a unified administration has been essential for some time.
6. It establishes a program of technical research designed to produce better housing at lower costs.

I think it is time that we speak very frankly in regard to what must be done to get adequate housing legislation. You have read the papers and you have long been familiar with the nature of the opposition to any progressive housing program.

You know and I know that the same small but powerful groups which have opposed all progressive housing legislation in the past will and are even now lining up against the Wagner Ellender Taft bill. We licked these forces in putting across the emergency Wyatt program. We must lick these same forces to get passage for the Wagner Ellender Taft bill.

It promises to be a bitter fight for by virtue of long experience these groups are adept ~~at~~ at lobby techniques. The wrecking of O.P.A., almost accomplished by now, is evidence of that. Therefore, it is essential that each of us makes our individual pressure felt. By so doing, we can insure the passage of this legislation.

Lastly, I want to direct your attention to the inactivity which has characterized the present state administration. As long ago as January 16, I asked the governor to call a special session of the legislature to concern itself with the housing problem in the state of Minnesota. Such a session has not been called, and no real efforts have been made by the governor or his administration to find a solution for the housing problem. Throughout the state, code restrictions, which can only be changed by action of the State Legislature, today restrict building and the sharing of homes. Nothing has been done to bring these building codes up to date so as to expedite building and sharing.

Minnesota is one of only five states in the entire U.S. today denied the benefits of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937. This act provides federal loans and subsidies for low rent housing in local communities. The present state administration, by refusing to support legislation under which the necessary local housing authorities could be established, has denied the people of Minnesota the benefits of this program. This means that federal taxes from Minnesota go to pay for housing in New York, New Jersey, California, and other states of the Union. The people of Minnesota, for lack of adequate state legislation, get nothing in return. Legislation so we can take advantage of the federal funds now available, must be passed at the next session of the legislature.

The much publicized Minnesota Neighborhood Redevelopment Act is at best but a short step in the direction of a state housing program. It makes no provision for federal aid, or for reduced costs for land acquisition. The day of haphazard housing is past. Progress can only be made by means of a coordinated, well planned, and intelligently administered state and nation-wide program.

An intelligent hard hitting state housing program can't be set up over night. The correction of present inadequacies will take time. Yet the Republican Administration continues to lag and to shirk its responsibilities.

Again, in the matter of price control, the present state administration has made no effort to protect the people of Minnesota. The inflationary spiral of residential real estate prices continues unchecked and uncondemned. Today we are viewing the sad spectacle of the ruthless destruction by the national congress of the price control program. True, rent control has been spared. But let's not fool ourselves, or relax our vigilance, the attack on rent control will continue. I want to make my position on this subject very clear. I am unequivocally opposed to any relaxation of rent control until the present housing emergency has been met. The price in human misery and wretchedness for lack of housing has already been great--let us not add to it by letting rents run free.

The record of the state administration in the housing field can be duplicated in every other field of governmental activity. It is time for a change. I want to urge upon you the candidacy of Mr. Harold Barker from Elbow Lake, Minnesota, the endorsed candidate for governor of the Democrat-Farm-Labor party. Mr. Barker, a veteran

- 8 -

of both World Wars, appreciates from experience the nature of the problems the citizens of Minnesota, veteran and non-veteran, face. A former speaker of the Minnesota House of Representatives and a small town newspaper publisher, he is prepared by training and experience to be your governor. The election of Harold Barker will guarantee real action, the kind of action that is needed today.

The same ineptness which Governor Thye has shown as the chief administrator of this state, will follow him to Washington should he be elected senator. By both training and disposition, Dr. Theodor Jorgenson, the endorsed candidate of the Democrat-Farmer-Labor party, will make a far superior senator. Dr. Jorgenson is a student of world affairs and a brilliant scholar and teacher. He came to this country from Norway as a boy, worked his way through school, served in the last war, and today is an outstanding man in his chosen field. Doctor Jorgensen knows the problems of the worker and the farmer from bitter experience. Doctor Jorgensen will be a senator of whom Minnesota can be proud.

In conclusion I want to urge all Minnesota citizens, Democratic and Republican, to vote in this crucial primary. Those of you who are DFL, be sure to call for your party's ballot. Let us all be thankful that we have retained our right to vote. Let us all use it.

Thank you, and good night.

[June 25, 1946]

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Thank you, and good night.



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