

Ronald Reagan Presidential Library
Digital Library Collections

This is a PDF of a folder from our textual collections.

Collection: Ronald Reagan: 1980 Presidential Campaign
Papers

Folder Title: [Miscellaneous Items]

Box: 873

To see more digitized collections visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/digitized-textual-material>

To see all Ronald Reagan Presidential Library inventories visit:

<https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/white-house-inventories>

Contact a reference archivist at: reagan.library@nara.gov

Citation Guidelines: <https://reaganlibrary.gov/archives/research-support/citation-guide>

National Archives Catalogue: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>

In public housing the failure isn't one of intent or purpose, but rather an abandonment of all we know about human nature and the incentives which in combination have led man from the skin suit and cave to suburbia and the penthouse. Back of the plunge into public housing was a widespread determination on the part of the people that no one in this richest nation should live with less than the sheltered necessary to guarantee sanitation, protection from the elements, and privacy essential to human dignity.

We still have that goal and the determination to achieve it. Yet after three decades and billions of dollars, we still hear the cry for crash programs, to clear the slums, provide both rural and urban housing, as though we were faced with some brand new emergency in a situation long and completely neglected.

If we oppose this cry, we are suspect of being greedy, inhumane, and unfeeling. Well, isn't it time, as Al Smith used to say, to look at the record. Even social science journals feature articles by liberal professors cataloging the failure of public housing. And if we turn to the daily press, we find frequent accounts of failure

on the inner pages of publications which devote the front page to quoting public figures demanding that we do more of what didn't work in the first place. The Wall Street Journal and St. Louis Globe Democrat report that a gigantic development in Saint Louis hailed a few years ago as a major break through in social justice, is in truth a dangerous place to live according to its own tenants. They cite among other things, mice and cockroaches, elevators and halls used as toilets, and bottles discarded by simply throwing them out the window. A woman, they complain isn't safe in the halls, elevators, or stairways. Fighting, drinking, and stealing are other complaints. This is not an exception.

The press in New York charged the highest delinquency area in the City is the lower East Side's park-like belt of public housing projects. A similar story comes from Philadelphia.

The New York Times, hardly an opponent of government projects or government spending, calls a Brooklyn project a 20 million dollar slum, ideal for breeding criminals. According to the Times, juveniles there who rob and smash windows have a standard reply. "What difference does it make?" It's public, ain't it?"

In our nation's capital, crime is heaviest in the area that contains two thirds of the District of Columbia's public housing. The Housing Authority says there is a waiting list of 5,000. The inference being that more public housing is needed. But in one unit alone, 109 of 350 apartments are vacant with their broken windows boarded up.

I don't vouch for these press reports or others of similar nature from almost every leading city. I do suggest there is reason for government to check the stories out instead of continuing a blanket defense of public housing and a blanket indictment of everyone who claims to have seen a broken window. If the story is as it has been reported, then government has an obligation to research thoroughly and without bias, why the failure.

Perhaps a good place to begin would be by asking why suburbia. Asking what has accounted for the pleasant neighborhoods of comfortable homes, the rows of apartment buildings, the carefully tended yards. There might be a clue-in of all things, one of their own government programs. F.H.A. The one factor that public housing planners omitted, with all their good intentions was a human factor--pride of ownership. The desire of each one of us to possess, to have something that is ours, to do with as we will. Isn't property

ownership at least worth exploring as a part of public housing, or is our goal merely to provide shelter for an ever increasing number of citizens who thus become permanently dependent upon government; or is it rather to make them self sustaining and independent by giving them a temporary boost, a handout when it's needed.

Today, the dweller in public housing apparantly engages in, or if the press is to be believed, endures at least, the willful destruction and deterioration of his living space. If he improves his economic lot, if he's offered a better job, or a raise in pay, he comes face to face with a choice between more income but at the price of leaving his home because his new status makes him no longer eligible for the benefits of public housing.

But what if he held a deed? What if he owned his dwelling unit, be it single house or apartment. Those totally destitute could be given ownership outright, not just tenancy in a public housing building. Others, not quite so totally destitute could perhaps on a sliding scale be given some equity with low monthly payments to be made. And thus, instead of rent they would be accumulating equity.

Pride of ownership would cause most of them to take a proprietary interest in their property, even to the extent of pressuring those who abuse the halls and elevators.

The man with a chance of economic betterment could seize his opportunity with no penalty, but instead could find himself ambitious to move ahead because his equity, his ownership of his dwelling space could be used to provide perhaps a move to the suburbs, or at least a move to larger or better quarters.

I don't offer this as a plan worked out in complete detail. I do suggest it as a fit subject for exploration and study, and perhaps worth a try as an experiment. Why not? To repudiate it without study brings up the question of whether there isn't some reluctance on the part of those who promote and administer public housing, to find any solution if that solution is based on private ownership.

I have little time and little patience for those who would
down grade America -- those who say we are sick, washed up.

These pessimists, these scowlers, these angry radicals do
not know the real America. They only know their own shortcomings,
they own distorted judgements, their own sickness.

I have no time, or patience, for those who damn us as violent
country. We are not a violent nation. There are those few who are
violent; they do not speak -- they do not act -- for America. And,
despite the raucous screams, and strident charges and the exaggerations
and distortions of these few -- this is still a gentle, kind and
tolerant nation.

As Eric Hoffer, our west coast long-shoreman-philosopher said
last week:

"Basically, we are the most gentle, generous, law-abiding and
cooperative people on earth ... To accuse America because an Arab
from Jerusalem committed this crime is the most slanderous thing
in the world."

And even now the poision pens in the other lands scream that
the recent tragedy is another example of the decadence of America.
Most of them would not be free to write if this nation -- ever
since World War II -- had not been standing between them and the
barbarians; if we had not poured our treasure and guaranteed with
our strength, their right to freedom and autonomy.

How quickly we have allowed the utter violence of governments
in Europe and Asia and Africa to be forgotten -- the millions of
murders of the Stalin regime; Abyssinia under Mussolini, Germany
under Hitler, China under Mao.

It is time that this country assumed some leadership at the
top and said to the rest of the world:

"We're not going to try to buy your affection any more. We're
going to demand your respect. We will start doing this by recognizing
that government's prime function is to protect the rights of the
individual -- to guarantee that he is secure in his person, in
his property, in his home -- to stand behind each citizen, even

FOREWORD

Professor Bouscaren has posed not only a Republican dilemma and a conservative challenge but a dilemma for all who believe man has a higher destiny than the ant heap and a challenge for those who still have faith in man's ability to govern himself.

One cannot read his factual account of the last campaign without being deeply disturbed by the extent to which we have adopted the enemy's greater immorality that "the end justifies the means". Men of undoubted integrity where their personal lives are concerned, men whose calling gave them a great responsibility to their fellow man felt perfectly free to ignore evidence of wrong doing if it was on their side of the political fence. These same men accepted as standard procedure the dissemination, if not the outright creation of falsehoods on the assumption that a different code of conduct governs the political arena.

This double standard can justify trading away freedom of other people in other lands to buy an extension of our comfortable way of life and postponement of a day of reckoning with an evil enemy. Those who talk of peoples' rights and a one man-one vote democracy should do some soul searching about their own reluctance to let the people hear two viewpoints and all the facts.

All of us must face the fact that while there is no easy answer to the problems besetting us, there is a simple answer. A simple answer to welfare at home, a simple answer to the evil abroad that threatens the dignity and freedom of man in every land. We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right without compromise and simply because it is the thing to do.

Ronald Reagan