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ADVENTURES OF A SLUM FIGHTER

ADVENTURES OF A SLUM FIGHTER

By Charles F. Palmer

TUPPER AND LOVE, INC.

ATLANTA

Manufactured in the United States of America

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To my mother
who gave me a sense of values
and
To my wife
who helped me keep them

A NOTE OF APPRECIATION

JAMES PUTNAM urged me to share these adventures and started me off on this book. Professor Thomas H. English said write as though talking with a friend. Miss Hazel Pate loyally typed the manuscript from my illegible longhand. Albert Love's keen interest and expert advice helped beyond measure. Hal Vermes also aided greatly. To all of these and to the many others who encouraged and commented, I am deeply grateful.

ABOUT THIS BOOK

By Beardsley Ruml

ONE OF THE most glaring obstructions to a better life for millions of our people is the obsolete design and structure of our cities. Already we are acutely aware that the conditions of our metropolitan schools, hospitals, transport and recreation facilities are intolerable. And worst of all are the slums.

That's why this book interests me so much. It's the author's adventures in wiping out slums. These are facts, not theories, because as a practical real-estate man he has done what he writes about. Reading like a novel, this book proves that slums cost us taxpayers more to keep than to clear; that the battle against child delinquency, disease, and vice is the battle against the slum.

The response to these ills of our cities has been wholesale flight from the city itself, but not from the city as such. The city remains *"la source"* as it has been since time immemorial. Accordingly, the cities will not wither away; they will be rebuilt.

The rebuilding of our cities is, therefore, one of the grand projects for the years immediately ahead. The programs will be varied—creative and imitative. The emphasis will be here on one objective, there on another.

Where better to start than with the slums! This book of a businessman's adventures tells what other countries have been doing for years, of the little we have done, and of the big job ahead for all of us.

CONTENTS

ADVENTURES OF A SLUM FIGHTER

I PRELUDE TO ADVENTURE

"YOU LOOK TIRED, dear." Laura's usually smiling blue eyes were worried. "It's time you took a rest."

Putting down the paper I'd been reading, I tamped the tobacco in my pipe and struck a match. "I certainly don't feel like playing eighteen holes today," I admitted. "I just want to take it easy."

"Well, now you can."

"Yes," I said reflectively. "The contracts with the architects have been signed, and the government has to clear out that slum at last."

"And," Laura added, "while they are completing the plans, you can catch your breath."

"I wonder," I said.

It was a quiet Sunday in May, 1934. My wife and I were sitting on a stone bench in the garden back of our home in Brookwood Hills, a residential section off Peachtree Street in Atlanta, Georgia. Our three daughters, Margaret, Laura, and Jeannette, had come home from Sunday school and were in their "office" above the garage, reading proof on *The Brookwood Bugle,* the neighborhood paper they published. The world was outwardly peaceful, but inwardly I was dis-

turbed. I picked up the recent issue of *The Economist* that Mr. Peck, of Bush House, had sent me from London.

"Listen to this, dear," I said to Laura. " 'There can be little doubt that the desire to see the whole population housed within a generation in dwellings large, sanitary, and pleasant enough to make decent living possible is more widely shared at the present moment than any other political ideal save only that of preserving peace.' "

"That," Laura pointed out, "is just what you have been trying to tell the real-estate people here in Atlanta."

"But they won't listen," I said. "It's like talking to the Great Stone Face."

Laura laughed at my frustration.

"When we were in England four years ago," I reminded her, "Peck said that slum clearance was actually helping to increase and stabilize real-estate values in London. So it's plain that when businessmen support slum clearance they not only benefit humanity, they are doing themselves a mighty good turn as well!"

"But," Laura observed, "they just won't face the facts."

"You're telling me? Take the Techwood area we are finally clearing. I told them what our slums cost in juvenile delinquency, extra police, medical care, and free hospitalization. Why, the city has been spending nearly ten times more in the slums than the slum tax returns. And most of those are delinquent!"

Laura had heard me go on like this a hundred times and more. And she was just as interested and eager to help solve the slum problem as I. However, she was agile at changing the subject when she wanted to calm me down.

"Know what day it is tomorrow?" she inquired.

"Certainly, it's Monday, the twenty-first of May."

"And what else?"

"You don't catch me there," I said with a chuckle. "It's your birthday. What would you like, darlin'?"

"Oh," she hedged, "I don't know."

"Name it."

"A vacation—for you."

"I sure could use it," I sighed.

"For a whole year now you've been fighting every Tom, Dick, and Harry all the way up to the White House. You're on the point of total collapse."

"But I can't go away," I protested. "I've neglected my own business, and I've got to get back to it. And my desk is snowed under with inquiries from cities all over the country about how to set up slum-clearance projects. And I've got loads of speeches to make. And—"

"A vacation," she cut in. "The last time we trouped Europe like tourists. We saw the Louvre, St. Peter's and the Sistine Chapel, Westminister Abbey. This time you'll have a complete rest—in Switzerland, maybe."

"H-m-m," I wondered aloud. "We could go to Italy again."

"But why Italy?" she wanted to know. "The moors of Scotland would be better for relaxation."

"I've been reading about what was done in Naples way back in 1888," I explained. "The King issued a hurry-up order to have the slums cleaned out. And do you know why?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Cholera!" I exclaimed. "It was no philanthropic gesture, my dear. The deadly disease was spreading from the slums along the Via Roma, and the King simply wanted to save his precious neck."

Laura sighed and said nothing.

"I'd like to see more of what they're doing in England," I went on with growing enthusiasm. "We got just a glimpse the last time. We could go to Germany, Holland, Austria.

Europe is much farther ahead than we are in slum reclamation, you know. Perhaps we could even see what the Russians are doing. Maybe we can cover the whole continent."

"Your vacation, remember?"

"I'll get in touch with the State Department." I puffed on my pipe, but it had gone out, and I didn't bother to relight it. "I'm sure that I can get some sort of credentials to act as an unofficial investigator of housing. Then we'll be all set to go!"

"Heaven knows I tried," Laura said quietly.

"Darlin'," I said, taking her hand, "every man hopes that sometime in his life he will have one great adventure. This can be the beginning of ours, yours and mine."

I was happy to see the sparkle come back into her eyes.

2 "SOMEBODY GETS THE MONEY"

EACH WORKDAY morning I drove from my home in Brookwood Hills to my office in Atlanta's business district. The concrete boulevard looped down through pleasant streets until it reached a corner of the Georgia Tech campus, then headed straight toward the center of the city.

I always moved a little faster here, for ugliness was packed close on either side: crowded, dilapidated dwellings, ragged, dirty children, reeking outhouses—a human garbage dump—a slum.

Why such an untended abscess should fester between the lovely campus of our proudest school and the office buildings in the heart of our city never consciously entered my mind. Though my business lay in central real estate, I had no connection with the Techwood slum. It was no concern of mine. Consequently, I put greater pressure on the accelerator as I drove through that slum twice a day, my eyes fixed on the downtown towering structures in the morning, and on the ivied wall of Georgia Tech's fine stadium as I headed homeward at sunset.

There were many more serious matters to think about in that fateful spring of 1933. Nearly fifteen million people were unemployed.

Meanwhile, a new president, for whom I had not voted, was in the White House. I was quickly caught up in the maelstrom. The upheaval of Roosevelt's first hundred days found me shuttling even more hectically between Atlanta and Washington. As president of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, I had been doing it since 1930. Everybody was engaged in a fury of planning. The business crowd was, in some ways, more radical than the White House. Behind their formal pronouncements, they were scared. At our committee meetings, business leaders frantically called on the government to do something!

The answer from the White House was an overwhelming piece of legislation that had something concrete for most groups and considerable confusion for everyone—the National Industrial Recovery Act. Its boldness, even today, would make every thoughtful citizen hold his breath. It changed America.

Among other things, the act empowered the President to set up a Federal Administration of Public Works and spend over three billion dollars on various construction. Tossed inconspicuously into the grab bag was low-cost housing and slum clearance.

I was intrigued. As head of a corporation with three office buildings on its hands, I had no direct connection with low-cost housing, and slum clearance was definitely outside of my interests. However, real estate was obviously involved. Maybe I should take a look, just in case.

The NIRA, now the law of the land, allocated more than a hundred million dollars for loan to nonprofit corporations if they would add a little equity, clear slums, and build housing. The whole matter was new and untried, and there undoubtedly would be many complications. But the man who

assembled the property for clearance and rebuilding could expect to earn reasonable commissions.

I started to gather pertinent information and lay plans. I acted simply as a businessman on the trail of some expected profits. My attorney, John S. Candler II, searched the new law with care. I examined municipal maps and records, looking for a suitable slum.

I wasn't long in finding it—that old acquaintance, Techwood, the nine square blocks of squalor that lay along my route to and from business each day. From my cursory and hesitant glances at these huddled structures, it seemed improbable, but the records revealed that nearly a thousand white families were jammed into this slum.

Frankly, at the time, of equal importance to earning commissions was the idea, gradually forming in my mind, that wiping out the slum area would enhance the value of our central business properties.

I was well pleased and ready to act. However, my wife brought up a point that troubled me.

"Have you," she asked, "ever seen a slum?"

"Why, of course," I protested. "I drive by Techwood every day."

"With your eyes straight ahead."

"Oh," I shrugged, "I've seen some ragged kids hanging around the shacks."

"They live there," Laura quietly said. "That's their home."

The next day I stopped my car—for the first time—just below the well-tended green lawn of the Georgia Tech campus. Facing away from this pleasant view, Techwood lay before me in all its ugliness. I knew, from the records, that the sagging wooden houses had been standing for half a century, that they were not hand-me-downs, once good but

since gone bad. They had been deliberately built as slums. Designed to wring the last cent from their use, for fifty years they had taken all and given nothing.

I wandered down the street, recalling that, until recently, the Tanyard Creek, which ran beneath the pavement, had been an open sewer. Ragged children, some the age of my own daughters, broke like frightened colts from a littered alley and stampeded across the smooth concrete of the highway. I wondered why they were not in school.

Two-story shacks gave double use of land by porches one above another. Underneath them, children stared through trash between crumbling bricks that haphazardly supported broken wooden pillars. At my approach, other youngsters ran out of sight between gaps in the foundations.

It was early morning, and pallets strewed the shelflike porches as those who lived within sought to escape the foul air of the overcrowded rooms. In the rear were pools of stagnant water near an open privy serving several families. Behind a shack a simple-minded girl lackadaisically split kindling wood, watched by a listless group of children.

A white-haired woman hunched over a rusty washtub. Ragged quilts were being aired on broken crates. A chamber pot hung beside a water dipper. A worn mop was suspended from a remnant of lattice on a sagging porch.

I had brought along a camera and took a picture quickly, but the tenants didn't seem to mind. They were past caring, licked by their surroundings. A little child scuttled beneath a filthy blanket as I tried to take his picture. The ancient whitewashed walls of his home had long turned scabrous. A battered wardrobe trunk made a pedestal for the shack's one treasure—a tin wastebasket. Its colored decoration depicted

a hoop-skirted belle, gaily smiling at the sniffling, frightened baby.

I turned back to my car. I'd had enough.

As soon as I reached my office that day, I sent to the Public Library for some books on slums. I began to read idly, then more swiftly as I was impelled by a gathering fascination. I was particularly impressed, though it had been published fifty years before, by *How the Other Half Lives,* written by Jacob Riis, a New York City reporter. Taking it home with me that evening, I found that Laura was already familiar with this militant book about slums.

My hit-and-miss reading had fruitful results. I discovered encouraging words from Franklin Roosevelt in a speech he had made as governor of New York in 1930 to the Board of Trade, when he said:

"You have just cause for pride in what you have achieved —the tall, slim buildings standing clear against the sky—but too often around their feet cluster the squalid tenements that house the very poor—buildings that should have been destroyed years ago, full of dark rooms where the sunlight never enters, stifling in the hot summer days, no fit habitation for any man, far less for the thousands of children that swarm up and down their creaking stairways."

The lead of Riis and Roosevelt and others took me inevitably to Atlanta's Police Station, where I had several interesting sessions with the officers who walk the beats.

"Who," I wanted to know, "lives in those Techwood shacks?"

"People," I was told. "White people."

"Do they have some income?"

"Oh, yes. They pay their rent or out they go."

"What sort of jobs do they have?"

"Well, Mr. Palmer"—the officer shifted uneasily in his chair—"we've got a lot of whores down there."

"But that area is alive with children!" I protested. "What about the bad influence?"

"There's a good deal of that down there," he admitted, "and not just from the prostitutes. They've got bootleggers and thieves, too. Somebody gets killed every now and then. Oh, there's plenty of bad influence, all right."

"Why don't you people clean it up?"

The officer eyed me blankly for a moment.

"Take a walk through there someday," he finally suggested. "Go into the houses, look at the people, count how many of them are jammed into each room."

"I already have," I said.

"Well, we try to hold down things as best we can. For safety's sake, our men patrol the area in pairs."

"But this place is wedged in between two of the most valuable sections of the city!"

"Yes, that's pretty strange."

"There must be decent people living there."

"Of course there are," the officer agreed. "That's the only reason any regulation is possible. But they're so damned poor, working at jobs that pay less than a living, or else on relief. They'd take their families away if they could, but they just can't. Where would they go?"

"There's one thing sure," I emphasized. "If a sound program was put under way to tear out that pesthole and rebuild it with decent homes, there shouldn't be any opposition."

The official glanced at me warily, his eyes narrowing.

"I don't know about that," he said softly.

"You don't?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Look, Mr. Palmer," he said patiently, as if explaining a

simple problem to a child, "all those Techwood folks pay rent. *Somebody gets the money.*"

So that was it, eh? Well, I thought to myself, we'll see. I went into slum clearance with my eyes wide open. It was one thing to promote and finance commercial buildings on downtown sites. But to promote, finance, and rebuild nine full blocks of one of the worst slums in the city, wreck its hundreds of hovels, and replace them with decent, safe, and sanitary homes for two thousand people? That was something else again.

The immediate problem was to develop a packaged program that would include an over-all estimate of costs. I conferred with Thorne Flagler, a builder, and Flip Burge, an architect, and was able to imbue them with some of my enthusiasm. They drew the plans and estimated the costs for what, we hoped, would be the first slum clearance in history by Uncle Sam. When the preliminaries were all set, it was my turn to carry the ball.

Promotion and group support were now the problem. Influential help was needed from a cross section of leaders who would understand the long-range benefits to the community. They must represent the views of capital, labor, local government, the press, and the social-service agencies.

The man whose help would mean most in organizing such a group was Clark Howell, Sr., publisher of *The Atlanta Constitution,* a morning newspaper that had recently won the Pulitzer Prize for its successful crusade against municipal graft. A great newspaperman and fearless fighter for honest journalism, Clark Howell was also a Democratic Party bigwig and warm personal friend of the new President. My stanch Republicanism appeared to have amusing aspects to him, but it in no way affected our friendship.

When I telephoned "Mr. Clark," he chuckled about the circus going on in Washington before asking what was on my mind.

"Slum clearance," he repeated after me. "But that's one of those Roosevelt ideas."

"It's a completely sound business project," I told him firmly.

"Maybe it's more than that. What area do you have in mind?"

"Techwood."

"Come over tomorrow," he said after a pause, "and bring along your plans."

The next day Thorne Flagler and I met with Clark Howell and explained the provision of funds in the NIRA to clear slums and make work.

"Selfishly," I volunteered, "I'd like to get after the Techwood Drive area to help stabilize values not far from our office buildings, and at the same time earn commissions through assembling the land. Thorne here wants to do the building, and Flip Burge will draw the plans. From a civic viewpoint, such a project will rid the city of one of its worst slums and also clean up the terrible conditions around Georgia Tech."

"I have been familiar with that property since boyhood," "Mr. Clark" said. "Though it is in the center of the city, it's a cesspool of poverty, squalor, and corruption. I'll help all I can to wipe it out, and good riddance."

The gentle, aging Dr. M. L. Brittain, president of Georgia Tech, was the next to agree to become a member of the Board of Trustees. Herbert Choate, president of the Chamber of Commerce, also accepted. In joining us, James L. Key, our stormy mayor, assured us of his full support. Herbert Porter,

general manager of Hearst's *Georgian-American,* accepted heartily, as did Sid Tiller from labor.

The sincere spirit of these leaders and the balance of the board was so gratifying that I sighed with relief. But I was counting my chickens too soon. I couldn't know then that prejudiced interests would threaten our mayor with political reprisals unless he resigned. Or that certain real-estate brokers were to call on Major John S. Cohen, editor of *The Atlanta Journal,* and warn him that until he withdrew from the board they would stop their advertising in his newspaper. The Major had an unequivocal answer for them.

"You can all go plumb to hell!"

A breathless woman burst in upon Herbert Porter at the *Georgian-American* and demanded that he get off our Board of Trustees at once.

"Why should I?" he placidly inquired.

"Why, my good man," she blazed, "don't you know that the buildings for the slum clearance are being designed with machine-gun nests on top? They are to be the forts in the coming revolution!"

There was more, lots more.

Through the summer months of that year, 1933, I was in many ways more active than I had ever been before, even in the earlier period when overwork nearly finished me while creating our office-building corporation in Atlanta out of nothing. Perhaps I was working with an even greater purpose. I found a freshness in the fast-moving events. There was a new look to everything. The city of Atlanta, which, though adopted, held my deep affection and pride, caught my eyes in a different, larger way, somehow.

Maybe a part of my nature that the regular run of business

matters had never aroused was becoming involved. My father had been a broad-gauge man: a bookstore owner, founder of the American Booksellers' Association, and for a time mayor of our home city of Grand Rapids, Michigan. My mother had been the moving spirit that created the Golden Rule Hospital for Crippled Children, and was a director until her death. Perhaps their hopes and dreams were stirring in me.

While organizing the Techwood project, I was called in on an equally urgent need to clear a slum across town near Atlanta University. My help was sought by its president, Dr. John Hope, and O. I. Freeman, civil engineer, and W. J. Sayward, architect, who had developed plans for a Negro housing project on a slum site almost in the heart of this great university for colored students.

The district was known as "Beavers' Slide" because of a mishap befalling Police Chief Beavers some years ago. It seems that while looking over the area from the brow of a low hill one day, the chief observed such lawlessness that in his anger he lost his balance and slid down the hill into the slums below.

We applied the pattern set by Techwood experience, and before long University Homes for Negroes was in preliminary shape, with Dr. Hope as chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Though Dr. Hope and I had met before, this was my first real acquaintance with him. I learned from colleagues of his how much his strength had been sapped by tremendous labors of devotion to the university, which he had expanded through the years. He was frail and tired very easily. Yet I felt a great strength in him.

One smoldering afternoon we climbed a slope of Beavers' Slide together. I had to hold his arm to assist him part of the way. But when he reached the top, his heavy gray head lifted, and his clear blue eyes swept down across the sorry

scene below with what I can only describe as militant benevolence. The thought struck me that here was a man who had probably worked harder and braved more scorn than anyone my life had ever touched.

"I've dreamed about this place changing into something beautiful," he said, making a wide gesture with his hand. "Not pretty, but straight and clean and full of light."

"We're on our way," I said. "We won't have too many problems."

"Oh, yes," he said sadly, "there will be great difficulties, I'm afraid."

"Do you think we might fail?"

"Fail?" Dr. Hope smiled. "Of course not. But we will have a struggle; and there will be times along the way when we will think we're beaten."

It made me proud to have him speak of the two of us as people working side by side. And that is the way it was for more than two long years, taking our beatings together and enjoying the inspiring moments of slow but steady progress. At each rough passage along the road, he mustered from somewhere a flare of extra strength, so it seemed that I felt his thin hand assisting me as I had helped him on the slope of Beavers' Slide that day.

John Hope was to live to see the kind of beauty he had hoped for replace that slum.

I practically became a commuter to and from Washington as federal red tape began to tie knots in our plans. It became clear that the distribution of federal money to local projects would drag along very slowly. First, there was the necessity of examining each project separately. Secondly, there was the inane order by Harold Ickes, Public Works Administrator, that he must personally approve every item of

expenditure, even if as little as five hundred dollars. Ickes simply would not delegate authority to his own trusted assistants or to anyone else. But after months of pulling and tugging we finally got action.

On October 13, 1933, Washington approved the companion projects: Techwood Homes for more than six hundred white families, and University Homes for about eight hundred Negro families, the first and second slum-clearance projects by the United States. I returned to Atlanta, bursting with stirring plans of action. However, a number of surprises awaited me in my home town.

Three days later, a hundred Atlanta real-estate owners and brokers met under the sponsorship of the Atlanta Apartment House Owners Association. Their focus of attack was Techwood Homes, and plans were hurriedly laid to block its development in the City Council and Washington as well. A committee was appointed, and legal counsel was engaged. A "fight to the last ditch" policy was grimly adopted.

Day by day, this group made charges that hit the front pages of the local newspapers, being given more than fair space by publishers who themselves were firm in their endorsement of the slum-clearance projects. The cry was that we had failed to inform the citizens of Atlanta that "there were hundreds of apartments vacant, thousands of homes being foreclosed because their owners could not pay the taxes, more than half the apartment houses being operated under rent assignment agreements with loan companies." Our new housing, it was claimed, should not be constructed because there was too much housing already.

Patiently our Board of Trustees explained that the razing and rebuilding of Techwood would in no way compete with privately owned properties since overcrowding had jammed as many families—and more—into the hovels to be destroyed

as the new homes would accommodate. We pointed out, again and again, that only extremely low-income families, who could not afford the higher rents required by private owners, would be eligible for the new Techwood Homes. The difference, we emphasized repeatedly, would be in the *kind* of housing and not in the quantity. But nobody seemed to want to listen and the arguments against us continued with increasing fury.

Our opponents acted like the wild-eyed woman who visited Herbert Porter—as if revolution actually were at hand. No logic—either economic or humanitarian—appealed to them. I was bewildered by the sustained ferocity of the attack upon us. Though having spent many years in competitive business, I did not realize the desperation with which some people will fight for tainted money.

The core of resistance was revealed as the opposition continued sending telegrams and delegations to Washington. The attack came out into the open when the Federal Housing Division wrote us seeking "any information you can give regarding the people involved in this wholesale transmittal of telegrams which is evidently an organized effort." A list of names was enclosed.

We made a check and established that these telegrams came from owners of slum properties who had been collecting extortionist rents for years, brokers who managed slum properties, trust companies or dummy real-estate corporations that concealed the identity of prominent people, and agents or home-office representatives of certain insurance and mortgage companies.

I had widened my reading on slum clearance and recalled the words of Harry Barnes, Britain's great housing authority. "There is no money in housing the poorest people well," he

wrote. "There has always been money in housing them ill." We were up against those who "housed them ill."

Hoping to launch a counterattack that would prove effective, I sorted out the photographs I had made of the Techwood slums and took many more. To these pictures we were able to attach the names of many people prominent in the opposition campaign, identifying them as the owners or managers of the slum properties. We sent this material to Washington. The pictures were better than words. The federal officials swung to our side—at least for the moment.

But the battle was far from over. Formal petitions were sent to the Housing Division, arguing for specific changes in our program and requesting that the sites for slum clearance be altered to include certain additional blocks and the elimination of others. Our investigation showed that such shifts were advocated, not in the public interest, but simply to include real estate that the petitioners wanted to sell.

Their tirade was completely irresponsible. Especially when it claimed: "Beavers' Slide is much superior to the average Negro community." I shuddered to think that this could be true.

There was a lighter side, too. Labeling Techwood Homes as "Palmer's Paradise," the opposition warned that "this queer alliance between Uncle Sam and Uncle Chuck" would come to no good end even though "the sorry little shacks along Tanyard Creek are not as fetching to the eye as would be the brick structures contemplated, nor as ambrosial to the nostrils."

Concentrating, as we were, upon the local fight, we trustees didn't realize that even greater obstacles were looming in Washington. Construction plans, real-estate procedures, and architects' agreements that we had worked out with great care were bogging down when submitted to government

lawyers. We were getting nowhere fast, so I agreed to go to Washington again. While intending to stay three days, I was there for six exhausting weeks. Fortunately, when she saw that I had no idea when I'd be back home, Laura packed some extra bags and joined me.

3 THE CIRCUMLOCUTION DEPARTMENT

THE FIRST FEW mornings in Washington I rolled out of bed full of pep. By the end of the week I had accomplished nothing, and the pep changed to just plain doggedness. One real-estate procedure, so sensible and logical that its setting up in Atlanta had been practically automatic, held me in bewildering conferences with a succession of lawyers for days on end, with no conclusions reached. At this rate I doubted whether a year of haranguing would result in final approval for Techwood.

One night I went back to the hotel and found Laura reading a worn, paperbound volume of Charles Dickens that some previous guest had left behind. Dickens had been a great favorite of my father's and us children. He guided us from listeners, as he read aloud, to readers making our own discoveries in literature. I idly picked up the book from Laura's lap and saw that it was *Little Dorrit,* which I remembered well.

It suddenly struck me that my efforts at dealing with government in Washington seemed as stalemated as those Dorrit's benefactor had had with Whitehall in London, so amusingly described by Dickens nearly a century ago. It was then, the reader may remember, that Dorrit's friend sought

her release from debtor's prison through Whitehall's "Circumlocution Department." This was the proper channel simply because "no public business of any kind could possibly be done at any time without the acquiescence of the Circumlocution Department." And it would not act until it had compiled "half a bushel of minutes, several stacks of official memoranda, and a family-vault-full of ungrammatical correspondence." In the Circumlocution Department, highly skilled personnel "muddled the business, addled the business, tossed the business in a wet blanket," and then issued instructions on "how not to do it."

I turned to this part of the story and read it aloud to Laura. The cloudy look in her eyes cleared to sunshine, and I forgot my utter weariness as we both burst into laughter.

The parallel between Britain's Circumlocution Department and our Housing Division's Legal Department was too apt to ignore. So the next morning, instead of continuing my interminable discussions with the attorneys. I excerpted appropriate passages from *Little Dorrit.* I wrote an introduction showing the parallel with Washington legalism. Then I had the paper mimeographed and circulated where it would do the most good.

It broke the ice. Where logic, earnest persuasion, and pleas had failed of results, satire got action. One lawyer told me with a grin that, according to the grapevine, it drew a resounding laugh from the President. Roosevelt, it was well known, ran a highly personalized government that often brushed off a multitude of details when they got in the way. As a result, my snail-like pace among the lawyers quickened to a run, and I returned to Atlanta immensely heartened.

Such encouragement might have been justified if Atlanta had been the only point of housing discussion in Washington. But the national publicity given Techwood had stimulated

similar projects in other cities, and in each of them the pattern of opposition closely followed our own. Even as I left Washington, broad attacks by landlords, insurance companies, and moneylenders all over the country were forcing changes in the over-all housing picture. Their objective, of course, was to stop the program altogether. Instead, they were forcing it into another and, to them, equally unwelcome channel.

With the widening discovery that the National Industrial Recovery Act included loans for limited-dividend corporations to build low-rent housing projects, capital began to cry that it was unfair competition in the money market, the building market, and the rental market. The now familiar claim that "there is no need for new housing as there's more than enough now" was increasingly heard in the land. Their main theme was "Keep out of our field and do not take our tenants," which was valid with sound property, but invalid when it came to slums.

Taking these highly vocal opponents at their word, the Housing Division adopted the policy that all projects must clear slums and rent below the level at which private capital could function. Thus, ironically enough, the capitalists forced the federal government directly into the housing business for the poorest people since the only way to get rents down—in a field where no profit could be made without exploitation—was for the government to do the entire job itself. Land could then be purchased for all cash, instead of part cash and part debentures in limited-dividend corporations. Interest would be at 4 per cent or less on the whole investment, instead of 4 per cent on the government loan and 6 per cent on the equities. By effecting these and similar savings, rents could be substantially reduced.

In line with this change in policy, the government pro-

posed, late in November, 1933, to transfer our two Atlanta projects to the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation, which had been set up to carry out the altered procedure. Each policy change, naturally enough, brought a new avalanche of difficulties to our long-harried Board of Trustees. And the constant pressure of the opposition kept gumming up the works. By mid-December, even Director of Housing Kohn had begun to vacillate, and we persuaded him to come to Atlanta to give our work his personal inspection. He brought along a lawyer and a technician, and they met with our board and held public hearings.

By the time Dr. Kohn and his associates were ready to return to Washington, the trustees had tentatively agreed to transfer both projects, and all the other problems had been settled—or so it was hopefully believed. I, however, had my doubts, for I had already been up against Washington's "Circumlocution Department."

Days went wearily by without a peep from Washington. My fellow trustees were busy men of affairs, giving unselfishly of their time, but the unwarranted delay made them restless. Letters and telegrams were sent to Dr. Kohn, asking him for immediate action. Still no word. Then Clark Howell, with three other members of the board, wired Secretary of Labor Perkins, official adviser on housing: "UNEMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS SO ACUTE IN ATLANTA WE ALL FEEL IT IMPERATIVE THAT TECHWOOD AND UNIVERSITY HOUSING PROJECTS BE STARTED AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE MOMENT." But Madame Perkins was apparently too far behind in her correspondence to notice this message at the bottom of the pile.

"Who's running things up there?" Clark Howell finally demanded of me.

"You're the Democrat," I pointed out.

He eyed me grimly.

"If I write a letter to Roosevelt," he suddenly proposed, "will you deliver it?"

"You bet I will!"

"Mr. Clark" immediately composed a message concisely giving the facts of the matter: both projects were ideally suited to the President's program; both would make work and clear slums; each was headed by trustees personally known to the President; everything was ready to start when Ickes gave Kohn the O.K. With the letter in my brief case, I caught the night train for Washington.

The next morning I phoned the White House and was given an appointment for late that afternoon. I got there on the dot and was greeted by Presidential Secretary Marvin McIntyre.

"Hello, Palmer," he said. "I understand you have a letter from Clark Howell."

"Yes," I said, "and it's mighty important, too."

"Well," he hedged, "the Boss is about to leave the office. I'll take it up with him later."

"How about right now?" I asked in desperation. "This matter is urgent. It's about slum clearance."

"That's a pet of his," McIntyre said. "Let's have it, and I'll see what he says."

I handed him the letter, and he disappeared. In about three minutes he returned with Roosevelt's voice crackling through the open door behind him.

"He got a kick out of it," McIntyre grinned.

Through the doorway, I saw the President sitting at a cluttered desk. Catching my look, he gave me a hailing gesture.

"Chuck, it's grand to see you again!"

I waved back, warmed by the same friendly smile that had greeted me when we first met at Warm Springs, Georgia, years before.

"What sort of Republican are you? Fighting for slum clearance!" he called to me. "We're pretty busy around here, but I'll stir things up for you. Mac will see to it."

He waved again as McIntyre closed the door.

"You'll hear from me tomorrow," he promised.

I was on pins and needles the next day until a message came through from "Mac" saying that everything had been taken care of. Later I was advised that Ickes would act favorably on the projects within a few days. I went back to Atlanta in excellent spirits, feeling that this time there would be no knots in the legal skein.

Who could stop us now? Who else but U.S. Comptroller General McCarl. He ruled the Emergency Housing Corporation unconstitutional just three days after my O.K. from McIntyre. That put Ickes's tail over the dashboard. McCarl's action, he blasted, was "a distinct violation of the Executive Order of the President" and giving the Attorney General "no time to do anything else than examine titles under this ruling." But Ickes's anger soon cooled. "Until the Comptroller General learns he is not running the Housing Corporation," he said more temperately, "we cannot move a hand." Who outranked whom? Congress untied this knot by hurriedly passing a bill that made Ickes president of the Federal Housing Corporation.

Meanwhile, fresh attacks were being made upon the Atlanta projects and our Board of Trustees, some of them sharply personal. Now I became the prime target of vilification: "Land to sell at outrageous prices, hidden interests, undisclosed commissions in shocking amounts."

So ruthless and well publicized were the charges that Ickes put some of his sleuths on my trail. I was investigated for nearly a year. The job was thoroughly done. Friends and foes were interviewed. It was a novel experience to catch glimpses of this detective work. Finally the investigators found, and so reported, that any land I owned that might be affected by Techwood had been acquired long before the project was conceived; that my interest in commissions had been disclosed when the project was first submitted to Washington and the commissions then officially approved; and, further, that I would not—and did not—take any compensation for services after the projects were transferred to the government.

It was gratifying to receive the unsolicited comment of special agent A. D. Mockabee just before he left Atlanta. "Palmer," he said, "if I'm ever investigated, I hope I come off with as clean a bill of health as you."

But valuable time was passing. Ickes became even more cautious, though Roosevelt had engineered passage of the bill setting up the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation, thus clearing away the legal blocks. It was March, 1934, before transfer was made of our limited-dividend corporations to the new government agency, with our Boards of Trustees becoming advisory committees.

The fight against final approval of the projects rolled on, increasing in intensity and prolonging Ickes's hesitation. Alarmed tenants vacated buildings on the sites to be cleared. Others remained but refused to pay rent. There was general confusion and anger among the owners of the properties. By mid-April, the Mayor of Atlanta, the President of the Georgia Federation of Labor, and many lesser lights petitioned Ickes to appoint the architects and go ahead with land purchase without further delay.

On May 17, the architects' contracts for Techwood were signed with Burge and Stevens, and Thorne Flagler was made superintendent. Two days later District Judge E. Marvin Underwood approved an order for the government to buy the land. Federal officials hailed the order as "epoch-making."

A full year had passed since Roosevelt had sent slum-clearance legislation to Congress. And there was still another delaying action. The Atlanta Apartment House Owners Association sought an injunction, and not until July was their suit dismissed. So we were off to a good head start.

That Atlanta was first had its disadvantages. Not only were we the guinea pig for each step never before undertaken, but other cities besieged us for help. Inquiries came from Nashville, Chattanooga, New Orleans, Savannah, Lexington, Lynchburg, Grand Rapids, Columbia, Montgomery, and Macon. Many sent delegations. We were glad to help, but it took time and energy. There were also innumerable speeches to make in Atlanta and elsewhere.

What with my own business to tend to besides, and flying back and forth between Atlanta and Washington, the day had come for some time out.

Laura said to me, "You need a vacation."

"I've got to catch up on some of my own business," I reminded her. "And these inquiries from cities all over the country about how to set up slum-clearance projects—speeches to make—"

"I think it's become incurable," she said.

"What has?"

"This crusade of yours."

"Nothing of the sort. It's sound business. Look at the increased value of central business properties once we get those

nearby slums cleared out—new playgrounds for children—less crime—"

Laura nodded. "You're about a week away from total collapse."

On July 7, 1934, we sailed for two months in Europe.

4 CHOLERA AND KINGS

ALL SEEMED comparatively quiet—at least as far as I was concerned—along the banks of the Potomac and the Chattahoochee when Laura and I left on the *Conte di Savoia* for Naples. Credentials had been arranged from Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Acting Secretary of Commerce John Dickenson that would inform other governments that I was a qualified investigator of public housing and was to be extended every reasonable courtesy.

"You're an unofficial ambassador," Laura said as we lolled in our deck chairs.

"On unofficial business," I added.

"Even your vacation," Laura said unhappily, "is unofficial."

"Well," I grinned, "Washington has given us official permission to pay all the expenses ourselves."

"And that's all right, too," Laura said with a smile.

I retreated back to my own thoughts of Italy and to speculations of what the enterprising Italians might have accomplished in clearing and rebuilding slum areas. When we had visited Italy four years ago, slums never entered my mind. Business buildings had been my primary concern, and a series of conferences in handsome offices had led to the audience chamber of Il Duce himself. Mussolini had been

most affable, rearing back in his big chair and glaring pleasantly at me with his banjo eyes, grinning now and then while his broken English crackled, as we discussed business buildings. What, I wondered now, would have been Il Duce's response if I had asked whether children died more rapidly in Naples's slums than elsewhere?

Consul Howard Withey and I hit it off at once, for he was interested in slums, too. He had, in fact, recently completed a report, "Municipal Construction and Slum Demolition at Naples." He gave me a copy, quickly lined up appointments, and assigned William Gargiulo as my interpreter and guide.

Reading Withey's report later, I learned that in the past five hundred years the center of Naples, a district known as Rione della Carita, had been going from bad to worse. It was situated on a slope, down which drainage water and garbage flowed constantly through the centuries. Its vast maze of buildings, crammed with poverty-stricken humanity, had developed like cancer cells, feeding on each other and slowly spreading farther into the city. The result, Withey wrote, "did not constitute the worst slums in Naples, but conditions were bad enough to satisfy any except the most exacting connoisseurs of squalor. The place was a nest of thievery and prostitution and, not infrequently, a breeding place of pestilence."

Smallpox had spread from an Atlanta slum, so we sent the victims to pesthouses. We treated the disease but left its source, the slum, alone.

Not so with the Italians! Cholera became so widespread in Naples in 1884 that His Majesty Umberto I and several ecclesiastical dignitaries visited the city; and, as a result, three sections, including the Rione della Carita, were ordered wrecked and rebuilt. This initial slum-clearance program,

called "the disemboweling of Naples," never quite got around to the Carita district, but by 1900 a passable job had been done on the other two slum sections of Naples.

The Fascists revived the Carita project in 1931, dividing it into seven zones for progressive clearance. On visiting zone one, we found that all 1,100 units had been cleared. A unit, we noted, meant not an apartment but just a single room, since the average occupancy was at least one family per room.

Work was also progressing in zones two, three, and four. When all were rebuilt, the buildings would occupy only 55 per cent of the combined sites, leaving nearly half for streets and other open spaces. This was in sharp contrast to the past when the old buildings had taken up all but 6 per cent of the land. Incidentally, at this time in history, Jacob Riis was reporting that certain New York slums covered all but 7 per cent of their sites.

Laws enacted in Italy before the turn of the century provided power to condemn slum property and thus made this wholesale clearance possible. Now, in 1934, we in America were just beginning to explore the problem.

After a good view atop the new post office we left the clearance areas for the adjoining slums that had not yet been tackled. They were above the Via Roma, a main boulevard of majestic proportions, lined with monumental buildings. I particularly recalled the Galleria Umberto I from my studies of business buildings during our visit to Naples in 1930. So we momentarily changed our minds and went to the Galleria first.

This great arcade faces the Via Roma, covering a tremendous area. Its four main streets—for pedestrian traffic only—form a cross with a colossal rotunda covered by a blue-glass dome. Multitoned marble and terra cotta are used on the

façades of the buildings. The streets are of gorgeously colored tiles.

After refreshing ourselves with a Carpano and "Seltz" at an outdoor table, we started for the slums. We crossed the Via Roma, passing the beautiful buildings opposite the Galleria, and suddenly found ourselves in dark caverns of squalor and filth. Here no *apéritif* tables lined the pavements. There was, in fact, hardly enough room to walk down the street without stepping in the open sewers that ran along each side. We passed a street urinal that had overflowed the passageway.

In Techwood our slums were only two layers deep; here they were seven. We could see into the ground floors. Each single room, with a door opening directly to the street, comprised a complete living unit about twelve feet square. The half-dozen layers above them had tiny eighteen-inch balconies at the single window of each unit. Too small to sit on, they served as catchalls and as anchorage for clotheslines that stretched across the narrow crevasses of the streets. Groups of chattering people huddled miserably together. Occasionally a child would dart out from nowhere and disappear across the street into darkness. We were relieved and happy to get out into the sun again.

William Gargiulo, our adroit guide, managed to wangle a private session for us with Pietro Baratono, High Commissioner, who represented both Il Duce and the King. Baratono, it was soon evident, knew all about slum clearance.

"Yes," he replied to my first question, "slum clearance is well under way. And I am putting on two thousand more men next week. They will clear about sixteen thousand units. No, it isn't costing too much. The entire job will run around

twenty million dollars, with the government's share some three million."

"Why so little from the government?" I inquired.

"Because insurance companies put up the money. Rent pays it back. The government pays the interest. We keep all costs down. I set the price we pay for land. Buildings are built by contract. Local materials are used. Solid masonry mostly. Practically no steel. No fancy business inside. But the outside is beautiful," Baratono concluded. "You shall see."

And so we did. Soon after breakfast next morning, our guide called for us in a large limousine driven by a uniformed chauffeur. We were taken directly to housing headquarters, where the director, Conte de la Ville Sur Illon, awaited us.

Today, we were informed, we were not to visit slums. We had already discovered that Naples still had them in shameful abundance. Right now we must see some photographs of slum areas taken before and after rebuilding.

Shuttling from table to flat-topped desk, Conte de la Ville handed me one exhibit after another. Studying them, I could hardly believe my eyes. The first example looked like dens of thieves conjured up by Hollywood. The walls of the moundlike structures, which lined a railroad track, were made of broken paving blocks. The roofs were castoff pieces of wood or metal. Stone steps, worn concave by generations of shuffling feet, led to other windowless hovels that stretched into the distance to a tall smokestack in the far background. Bad as these were, I had seen, too often, their counterparts in America.

The Director covered this picture with one showing a group of four-story buildings looking much like Carnegie Libraries. These were the Case Popolari, Naples's public housing. I immediately recognized the railroad track and the

tall chimney in the previous photo. A neat wrought-iron fence with stone pillars now bounded the railroad.

"All public buildings," the Director said vigorously, "must be beautiful—even those occupied by the poor."

"But that costs money," I said.

"Only a little more," Conte de la Ville replied with a gesture. "And we save on the insides. No frills. No extravagance. All for utility. All for sanitation. All for good health."

My skepticism must have shown on my face. The Director hustled to the table and opened a large book. Here were floor plans done in color. They gave every detail of the truly Spartan interiors. Transparent overlays showed how the first floor compared with the second, and so on up. Drawn to scale, this superlative record book was as concise and complete as any I had ever seen.

It developed that the main source of funds was the National Institute of Insurance. This gigantic government-controlled corporation had vast resources since everyone had to pay into it. The Institute's major investments were in the Case Popolari. First, because housing was a good risk. Secondly, and perhaps of even greater importance, because good housing so appreciably lowered disease and mortality rates that the Institute's losses were materially reduced.

The loans were for 100 per cent to publicly administered corporations at 5 per cent interest, and 2.7 per cent amortization, including fire insurance. Properties remained tax-free for twenty-five years. As Baratono had said, the government paid the interest. It also maintained the grounds. Consequently, all the rent had to cover was the amortization, which made the rents so low that even slum dwellers could afford the apartments.

Rent for the smallest units of less than 200 square feet was only about $1.75 a month. The average size of four rooms,

exclusive of halls, kitchen, and toilet, rented for less than $13.00 a month, scaled up or down in accordance with the ability to pay. This included water, but electricity was extra. Nonpayment of rent by the fourth of each month was cause for automatic eviction in ten days.

No subtenants were allowed because, though many families had eight or more children, boarders were always welcomed to boost the family income. As it was, several of the new projects averaged three persons per room, making a full dozen in the family. This was, however, a marked improvement over the average of twelve per room in the Carita slums. Incidentally, tuberculosis had dropped two-thirds among the people transferred from the Carita District to the Case Popolari.

Our classroom work over, the Director announced that he would now conduct us on a field trip. We drove to an industrial district in the eastern part of the city and soon came upon the villa-type buildings and surrounding gardens of Case Popolari Luigi Luzzatti. The façades of the buildings were in delicate tones of brown and yellow stucco. The 2,547 rooms were all occupied. Despite the frills outside, there were none within. The floors were of concrete with marble-dust topping, and just as inexpensive was the wall-bearing construction of pumice and concrete. There were no baseboards to maintain. Each room had an outside window meeting the standard requirement of 10 per cent glass to the room's floor area.

The kitchen stoves provided the little heat required in southern Italy. Since iron and enamel were in scarce supply the sinks were of vitreous material. Wherever possible, kitchens faced the north so louvers in the exterior wall would let cool air into a closet for food storage. There was no icebox. The glazed wainscot was spotless in the units we saw.

So was the rest of the apartment. Laura called my attention to the fact that even the corners of the long halls connecting the rooms were clean.

I inquired about bathing facilities and was told of central provisions within the project. We took them at their word, not knowing what the standard of modesty would be in case we asked to inspect the baths. After all, the Baths of Caracalla in Rome some several centuries ago had quite a reputation for informality.

Group facilities brought up the question of where the children played. There were no porches; only an occasional balcony as an ornament, or to save a tenant from falling out a window. Nor were there any private yards. Were the youngsters confined to their homes?

Our host smiled in anticipation as he conducted us to what he called "the nest," a separate building conveniently located on the site. There were, I noticed, no traffic arteries to cross to reach it from any direction. "The nest" was, in fact, a super day nursery. All of the furnishings were in miniature—chairs, tables, toilets, washstands—and constructed of the simplest and sturdiest materials obtainable.

In the lunchroom the dishes on the cove-edged, Lilliputian tables were of machined aluminum. The floors were of cork tile. The walls were severely plain, finished in washable paint with dado of pleasing light green. Any pictures on the walls? There was one—Il Duce.

In the room where the children received instruction were tiny double desks and straight-backed chairs facing teacher. The floor was terrazzo, and the wall dado had a colored tile cap. Pictures? There were two this time—Il Duce and Victor Emmanuel III.

We glimpsed the outdoor playgrounds, were told of the maternity clinic and how the children of working mothers

were cared for. Then we moved on to another project, the Duca d'Acosta, on the western outskirts of the city.

This development of 2,240 rooms was less desirable as it took longer to get to work. We inquired about laundries since there were no tubs in the kitchens here or at Luigi Luzzatti. We were taken to a large basement room where some automatic equipment and rows of tubs, many of slate, were available for the free use of the residents. The flat roofs of the buildings served as drying yards.

There were fewer children about at D'Acosta, and we learned that many of them were at public summer camps in the mountains. About 60,000 children from Naples were given an arranged vacation that year. After visiting two more Case Popolari, we called it a day.

The next morning, Laura and I set out again with just our guide, Gargiulo. There was one development so different from the others that Gargiulo said we mustn't miss seeing it. It was in a congested area of central Naples, where 100 per cent of the slum dwellers and slum merchants were being rehoused on the same site. This method was called "decanting," from the ancient process of slowly pouring old wine into new bottles, thus eliminating the dregs.

The project covered ten city blocks. All the occupants of block one were moved into an existing Case Popolari. The old block was wrecked and rebuilt. Then the tenants of block two shifted across the way to the rebuilt block one. This "Going to Jerusalem" procedure was carried on from block three to two, four to three, and so on. Finally, when the last one, block ten, was finished, the former occupants of block one were moved from their temporary quarters to block ten. By using this progressive method, all of the slum dwellers were rehoused on the same site, and only 10 per cent had to leave temporarily. At our visit the job was about midway

to completion, and I took motion pictures showing all stages of the "decanting."

Where to house people while their slums are being demolished and rebuilt has always been—and still is—a very serious problem. That the Italians were able to solve it through "decanting" gave us an example we could well use back home.

5 ROMAN CIRCUS

WE HAD much to think about en route to Rome. Not that there was much time, for the 140-mile trip took only two and a half hours by *direttissimo,* nonstop train. Laura agreed we hadn't had much rest, but we did have an entirely different kind of experience.

"It's all right to see the usual tourist sights," she said, "and I'm glad we took them in on our past trip. Then we saw *things.* I mean, what's left of Pompeii, the museums, Capri, and the Blue Grotto. But this time we saw *people.*"

She had something there. Of course, we had been—in a limited way—with the people of the country before. I'd had sessions with businessmen about office buildings and how they carried on their work. Occasionally Laura and I would meet their wives and families. But for the most part our contacts had been with the staffs of Cook's and the American Express, with hotel managers, headwaiters, guides, cabdrivers, and shopkeepers. The relationship was mostly that of buyer and seller, not of citizens of different countries discussing how each tackled mutual problems such as slums.

We were getting to know Italy in a way impossible when doing the usual tourist rounds. And we liked it. Especially the attitude of public officials, high commissioner, *direttore,*

architetto, and all. They were like children showing off favorite toys.

"You know," I mused to Laura, "the way Baratono, De la Ville, and Carnelli strutted their stuff makes me wonder if their program isn't sort of a dictator's stunt. Most of the capital for it comes from the Insurance Institute, which gets its money through compulsory payments by all the people. Then, too, it wasn't until the Fascists grabbed power that slum clearance spread. You remember that the jobs the King started back in the 1880's never got around to the Carita District, although it was on the original schedule. Maybe the Fascists are using slum clearance like the old Romans used circuses—to pander to the people in order to stay in power."

"That may be," Laura shot back, "but there's a lot of difference between throwing people to savage beasts and saving them from savage slums."

"All right, all right," I placated her. "I thoroughly agree. But what I'm driving at is this: aren't the compulsory methods being used by the Fascists in Naples—and they seem to find them necessary—totally unsuited to us in America?"

"Of course they are," Laura replied, "in more respects than one. Here all children are herded to state camps. We send ours as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. True, there aren't many Girl Scout or Boy Scout troops in our slum districts, though. When you make these comparisons, you get sort of bewildered. I feel all mixed up."

"Well," I said, "the way it looks to me, there are phases of slum clearance, even in our country, where compulsion must be used. Take the purchase of land, for example. If Judge Underwood had not ruled that the power of condemnation could be applied to buying the Techwood site, landowners would have held out for astronomical prices, and I doubt if we could have gone ahead. Anyway, pretty soon we'll

be in Rome, where we should find out a lot more. I want to talk with Allievi. Carnelli told me Allievi had much to do with the King's first slum clearance in Naples and that he now lives in Rome. I understand he is quite feeble but gets a big kick out of reminiscing."

Time had flown as fast as our train had passed the olive groves and vineyards of the beautiful Terracina and Fascati regions. I looked out the window and saw that we were already in the outskirts of the Eternal City.

The Hotel de Russie Grand was just as we had left it in 1930. There were the colorful gardens where we breakfasted each morning. The flowering shrubs and trees of the adjoining Palatine Hill were as lovely as ever. From our windows we saw the familiar Cleopatra's Needle in the Piazza del Popolo, only a stone's throw from the historic Tiber.

The morning after our arrival, I renewed my acquaintance with Alexander Kirk, counselor of our Embassy, who had helped arrange my audience with Il Duce four years before. I explained the purpose of our visit and said that, first of all, I was extremely anxious to meet Lorenzo Allievi, the contractor who had worked on slum clearance in Naples during the cholera epidemic of the eighties. I also asked to see some of the Case Popolari of Rome. Cecil Mathews, of the Embassy staff, was assigned as our interpreter and guide.

Upon returning to the hotel, I found A. Edward Stuntz, of the Associated Press, waiting for an interview. We had an interesting chat over a bottle of wine, and Stuntz gave me some excellent background material on the Italian view toward public housing.

Il Duce, it seemed, divided housing into three parts, somewhat as Caesar had divided Gaul. Mussolini's were Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven. "Hell" was for the mendicants and

unemployables. They were housed in barracklike buildings with common halls for sleeping, eating, and sanitation. Erected and maintained by the State, while the standard was low, "Hell" was at least clean.

"Purgatory" gave the unemployed, who were temporarily out of work, a rather better break than "Hell." Here families were separated in blocks and thus had some degree of privacy. However, kitchens, baths, and lavatories were in common use.

"Heaven" was built as a complete community for those too poor to pay the rent of private developments, yet above the type of tenants in "Purgatory" and "Hell." These "Heavens" included schools, playgrounds, infirmaries, maternity wards, and day nurseries. The living quarters provided complete privacy, having their own kitchens and sanitary facilities. Parents were awarded prizes for the cleanest homes, and children were taught hygiene. While obviously unworkable in a democracy, I had to admit that this sliding-scale system of housing the poor had its points.

The following afternoon, as I was told that no interpreter would be needed, I went alone to Lorenzo Allievi's home on Via A. Farnese. Though right in the city, it was much like a villa. There was a massive entrance door, great windows with closed blinds, and a wrought-iron balcony. An aged woman answered my ring and led me to the high-ceilinged room where Allievi was seated.

He beckoned me to sit beside him, and as he cordially grasped my hand firmly, I had the feeling that his long fingers would reach twice around mine. Then in the dim light I saw his eyes. They were ringed with bluish circles, but dark and smiling in his sallow, cadaverous face.

"You want to talk with me about slums?" he inquired with a strong accent. "You want to know what happened in

Naples? I haven't thought about those days much lately. They were so long ago," he sighed, "and no one asks me any more."

As I posed some questions, this courtly, friendly, aged grandee seemed to sit up a little straighter. His words became stronger and more distinct, and I understood his English better.

"In 1884," he began, "cholera was killing the people of Naples, all kinds, the high and the low. The doctors couldn't stop it, and King Umberto stepped in. He had to, or lose most of his subjects in the south. There was no telling how far the pestilence would spread. Some of the church officials went to Naples with the King."

Allievi got up feebly and took two volumes from the book-lined wall.

"Here are the contracts." He slapped the books together with a startling bang. "They give the facts. You're a businessman. Facts are what you want, not a lot of fancy recollections by an old man."

"I shall be very thankful," I said.

"I didn't start the Naples job. It was one of my relatives, Antonio Allievi, from Milano. The problem was stupendous, and its solution a colossal undertaking. Luckily a law had been passed in 1865, and strengthened in 1879, that gave cities the right to regulate building. It was first decided to go ahead with small contracts, but that didn't work; the job was much too big. On October 3, 1888, one big contract was let, backed by a syndicate of all the banks in Italy. The state gave 75,000,000 toward the total estimated cost of 250,000,000 gold lire. That included land, streets, sewers, and all construction.

"The work dragged on for years. The trouble wasn't just organization. A main difficulty was that the economy of the

country changed from free trade between 1884 and 1890. This stimulated the building of houses in Rome, Genoa, and Turin. The consequent demand for labor and materials in the north made them hard to get in the south. Besides, the capital charges were so heavy during construction and tenanting that interest ate up the government's 75,000,000 lire in the first five years. Another trouble was a law permitting real-estate banks to do speculative financing. They in turn, tried to boss the contractors. Things got so bad that, by 1892, the banks chucked up the whole business, and the ship sank. I was made manager in 1894. A second contract was signed in 1894, and then a third in 1897. A big job takes lots of paper work, you know."

As he talked, Allievi kept flipping the pages of the contract books with his long fingers. Though I guessed that he hadn't referred to them for many years, he found the data he wanted unerringly.

"I was thirty-six at the time," he continued. "Just the right age to take hold. Anyone older is all washed up!" That gave me a start because I didn't feel a bit "washed up." Allievi continued: "It is true now as it was then: the world is made for young men.

"I found that houses for about six thousand people had been completed. There also were many more foundations in, and several buildings under roof. We had 14,000 workers, and I did the best I could with what I had. The very worst pestholes were cleaned up. We never reached the Carita District because state help didn't continue long enough. Also, it was not the kind of job for private capital in the first place.

"By 1900 the ship we had plugged up in 1894 sank again. All assets were turned over to the Bank of Italia. With 5,000,000 lire coming in each year from the houses then rented, and writing off most of the investment, the project

was put on a sound basis. And what did we learn? Just this: slum clearance can't be done with private funds. Poor people haven't the money to feed and clothe themselves, let alone pay a rent sufficient to cover capital charges. That's what I learned. I learned what cannot be done."

Allievi spoke the last words slowly, letting each one sink in. His chin dropped to his chest, his hands were still, and his sad eyes seemed to study the delicate pattern of his Aubusson rug. The reverie lasted but a moment.

"But you," he said, "don't want to know what cannot be done. You want to know what can be done. Maybe I can help you. Maybe I can give you something to think about." Allievi's enthusiasm ran away with him once more. He picked up a pad and pencil.

"Look, this is a slum," and he drew a large square. "Now, this is where the middle-class people live," and he drew a smaller square. "Finally, here is where the rich folks have their homes," and the square he drew was the smallest of the three.

"When people get richer they want better houses and better clothes. In your country they also want better automobiles. The old clothes they give away. Now what happens? The people who are given the old clothes get at least better than they had. Those who trade for the secondhand houses and automobiles get better houses and autos than they had, or naturally they wouldn't trade. Do you see my point? Everyone gets something better when a middle-class man moves up and builds a home among the rich folks. He has his new fine home, which vacates his old. Some family moves up from the slums to occupy it. Then the slum house is destroyed. Simple, isn't it? Just see to it that people who can afford to do so build better homes. Next, let their old homes, still in pretty good shape, go to the slum dwellers. Then tear down the slums."

Some theory that! I stared at the old man in surprise. In the years ahead I would hear it dusted off, in America, as a highly original idea. That it never worked anywhere made no difference to those who advanced the theory back home. Their object was to confuse thinking and thus slow down slum clearance. That it won't work is simply because the rich are counted in the thousands while the poor number in the millions. The whole reasoning is absurd.

And yet here was this old man, who had seen what public housing can do for the poor, deluded by this myth. But I had learned much from him that was sound, and most of his thinking was true as his next words proved.

"The world is getting better," he said as I got up to go. "It will be better still when all the slums are gone."

Allievi gathered up the two old contract books. He held them horizontally, as one does the Bible sometimes.

"Will you permit me to give you these?" His long fingers held the books fondly. "They are in Italian, and I'm afraid you won't find them of much use. Mostly they cover the legal angles of what I did. But this map shows where we worked in Naples."

I was too dumfounded at this generous gesture to speak.

"Wait," he said with a warm smile. "I should like to write your name and mine in them. And the date, too." With a flourish, he inscribed both volumes at his Florentine desk. "Here, with my sincere best wishes to you and your great country." I noted he had not included the Roman numeral XII after the date as loyal Fascists did to show how long they had been in power.

We walked to the door, which was opened by the white-haired woman who had greeted me. A shaft of sunlight caught Allievi's face. His smile was like a benediction. Again our

hands clasped. Slowly I drove back to the Russie and went to the garden to collect my thoughts.

Was there anything to the fact that Allievi omitted the Fascist Roman numeral XII, and merely wrote "18/7/34" as the date in the books he gave me? Was that his way of saying, "I am not a Fascist"?

It was too early in the trip to make valid comparisons with our visit in 1930. Also housing studies were bringing me closer to the grass roots this time than commercial building studies had before.

What about the leaders of the two countries, Roosevelt and Mussolini? This was not just idle speculation. I had discussed Mussolini with Roosevelt, who was then governor of New York, while seated next to him at an informal 'possum supper in Georgia in November, 1930, shortly after having seen Il Duce.

Roosevelt's questions about Italy were casual. So I referred to the session with Il Duce only incidentally. But Roosevelt wanted to know what sort of a "guy" I found Mussolini, saying he liked to hear about leaders, whether or not he agreed with them.

As memories crowded back about our long discussion so many years ago, I fell to wondering about America and Italy, Roosevelt and Mussolini, and how they fitted into slum clearance now. How long would a country that seemed to delight in the antics of its Duce stick to slum clearance as an instrument of national policy?

But what about our country and slum clearance? Did President Roosevelt know more about it than the single section of the NIRA that got our program started in order to make jobs to help solve the depression? And would slum clearance be dropped when full employment came again?

Surely that might well become one of the great issues of our day. Time would tell. It was way too early for any conclusions yet. I'd better get back to my wife. It was my guess that Laura's afternoon tour of museums couldn't compare to my talk with Allievi and the daydreams that followed.

Alexander Kirk phoned the next day to say Harry Hopkins was in Rome and wanted to talk to me in the Embassy at three o'clock about the housing studies I was making. I quickly accepted. Cecil Mathews arrived at the hotel soon after, and we headed for the local headquarters of the Case Popolari.

There we met Ing. Comm. Innocenzo Constantini, Direttore Generale dell Instituto per le Case Popolari di Roma. He was all that his name and titles implied—a stuffed shirt. But he had capable assistants, and we got right down to the business at hand with him and his staff.

It developed that there were around 82,000 people living in Rome's older public housing. What was now being built was costing 10 per cent more than normal commercial construction because they had to hustle to house those being moved from slums between the Colosseum and the Victor Emmanuel Monument as a new main avenue was hurriedly being cut through the district. Although the work was rushed, it couldn't keep pace with the families displaced for the new avenue. So four hotel-like structures were hastily erected, each in a separate quarter of the city. A hotel housed about a thousand families. At first a general kitchen was used, with lots of stoves and a common eating room. But this didn't work out as the women objected to other women seeing what they cooked. So a compromise was made by cutting up the general kitchen into smaller ones for every three or four

families. Each housewife had her own two charcoal rings for cooking and a separate sink.

Construction contracts were let after Constantini's own estimators had totaled the probable hours of labor and quantities of materials. Then they estimated the jobs themselves and set a high and a low price. This was kept secret, and all bids above or below those two figures were thrown out.

I was puzzled at this, to say the least. It was obvious that Constantini would not accept the higher bids. However, if a bid was below their lower estimate, why, I asked, didn't they make the contract and save the extra money? But Constantini said no. They had found that was as bad business as paying too much. His estimators were skilled men and knew what each job should run. They even had their own testing laboratories for materials and their own brickyards. If a contractor tried to build too cheaply, he would skimp on the specifications to keep from losing money. Consequently, Constantini's policy was to deal only with those builders whose proposals made sense to his estimators. They called in the contractor closest to their middle figure and then dickered with him.

In Rome, financing, management policies, and rents followed about the same pattern as in Naples. Here, too, the incidence of tuberculosis was reduced, being in the Case Popolari only one-fifth of that in the slums.

Constantini brought out some other interesting figures. The birth statistics showed that twenty-three babies were born per annum to one thousand people in the slums, while in the Case Popolari the rate was only sixteen. Since a dictator's power rests upon the size of his armies, he naturally favors a high birth rate. I therefore inquired whether the lower birth-rate in the public housing displeased the Chief of Government.

"Yes, Il Duce wants more babies everywhere," Constantini

replied, his face clouding. "We encourage families to have children. The state offers cash benefits and provides free maternity care. I wish that the birth rate was higher in our Case Popolari. But the final result is not too bad. For, you see, deaths in the Case Popolari are only eight per thousand against seventeen in the slums. Since our public housing has three-quarters as many births as the slums and only half as many deaths, the balance is very favorable indeed."

Thus the poor were benefited, and Mussolini got his armies, anyway.

Mathews seemed to enjoy translating Direttore Constantini's little speech, which was delivered with many appropriate gestures. Later I checked to make certain that Mathews's figures were correct and found they were. Since it was still several hours before I was to see Hopkins, I suggested that we inspect some housing. After prolonged expressions of appreciation all around, Mathews and I left and picked up Laura at the Russie. Architetto Giorgio Guili, from Constantini's office, came along to make our survey official.

Our first stop was at the Albergo Popolare, one of the four hotels providing temporary shelter for families displaced by the work on the new avenue through the city. It looked not unlike a Florida East Coast hotel of the 1890's, but of stucco instead of wood. The rambling wings were three or four stories high, with a sizable porch here and there. The building was topped by a clock tower.

The main floor was similar to that of any other hotel except that it was as plain and bare as a jail corridor. It led directly to the common kitchen, which had been cut into smaller rooms, as Constantini had told us. It was around noon, and each of the kitchens had its quota of bustling housewives. Most of them acted rather sullen, as if they resented our presence as well as that of their neighbors. Arsenic leaves

hung on a wall, discoloring it. Guili told us that arsenic in that form was supposed to kill bugs, but he doubted it. I refrained from asking what it might do to children.

We inspected the two-story group houses that were nearing completion around the hotel. Well sited as part of the larger project, the floor plans developed the greatest possible square footage into livable area. The materials used were inexpensive yet long-lasting.

As families moved from the Albergo into these smaller units, the central building would have served its purpose as a temporary hotel. Then it was to be converted into a combination community center, school, day nursery, clinic, and management office. The entire conception of the project was so practical that I felt many of its ideas could be adapted for use in America.

Guili said that nearby was a particular building of an entirely new design that we mustn't miss seeing. So shortly we found ourselves within a jagged circle of six- to nine-story apartments, all connected and facing on central gardens and a playground. In the middle was the building Guili had mentioned—an eight-story structure of four wings making a perfect cross. The wings were joined by an open spiral stair. The floor levels were staggered, as with a ramp garage back home. Thus the entrances to the central stairs were at half-floor rather than full-floor intervals.

This interesting and unusual design had several practical aspects. There were no public corridors and fewer stairs to climb. The wings had but two families per floor, each with a private entrance, and only one means of access, the corkscrew stairs.

When I asked Guili if there wasn't objection to so many stairs, he insisted that we go and see for ourselves. While there appeared to be eight stories, we found that there were

but seven. This illusion came from the staggered floor design. Where one wing would have ended below another, a laundry drying yard was made in the space added when carrying the parapet of the higher section to the lower, so that they would conform in height.

In climbing the stairs, we discovered that the steps were wide and the rise gradual. Made of gaily colored terrazzo, the stairways were open on all sides except where the wings joined. The climb to the top was not tiresome and well worth the breath-taking view of the beautiful gardens below us. I noticed built-in benches at intervals and was prompted to ask Guili again if they found any resistance in renting the upper apartments. His answer was that the higher apartments were rented to young couples, and the lower floors to older people with large families.

On the roof there was what looked like a large fire hydrant. Since the building was of solid masonry, there seemed no need for such elaborate protection. But upon inquiry, Guili informed me that the water was used to clean the stairs. It was turned on late each night and the water simply cascaded down the stairway. No need to scrub each step on your knees. Would I like to see it work? Since Laura and Mathews were only halfway up the stairs, I declined and saved them a drenching.

After dropping off Laura at our hotel, I headed for the Embassy and my appointment with Ambassador Long and Harry Hopkins. I had known Hopkins casually when he was with the WPA in Atlanta, but had never met "Judge" Long, as his lawyer friends called him. I found that he was as lanky as Hopkins.

We gathered in a large living room, where Hopkins sprawled in a big easy chair, while the Ambassador made the

usual polite inquiries. Was the Embassy staff being useful in the studies I was making? Was there anything more that they could do? I assured him that everything was just fine, and we got around to talking about what I had seen in Italy. Then Hopkins suddenly sat up and began to take notice.

"Damn it!" he exclaimed. "I envy you, Palmer. You are making a close study of housing while I'm only hitting the high spots. I would give anything if I could stay abroad longer, but I have to get back to Washington. The President sent me over to look at housing and social-insurance schemes in England, Germany, Austria, and here in Italy. Fat chance on my whirlwind tour. Say, tell me about the Techwood job you're doing in Atlanta."

Hopkins's alert mind was jumping around, as usual. After listening for not more than a minute, he interrupted me.

"Have you seen what's going on here in the Pontine Marshes?"

"I've heard about the wheat fields and the new cities," I replied, "but I don't think that's quite in line with my study of slums."

"It's great stuff they're doing," Hopkins said enthusiastically. "I drove through the district, and the cities they are building from nothing will knock your eye out. It's not slum clearance, no. But they are taking people from the relief roles—thousands at a time—and resettling them on farms in the Pontine because they can't make a living in the cities. Like your slum-clearance business, it's finding the poor a place to live. You simply must see it!"

"I'll fit it in somehow," I promised.

"And when you come back home," he suggested, "I want us to get together in Washington. You can tell me what you have learned that might fit in with my job on WPA, and how you think our housing program should be set up. I hear

that you are taking lots of movies and I want to be sure to see them. O.K.?"

"Right!" I readily agreed, happy to find someone from back home who was as interested in housing as I was.

Early on the following Tuesday, July 24, our party set off for the Pontine Marshes. Constantini had assigned an English-speaking assistant, Benedetto Polizzi, to accompany us. Mathews brought along his fourteen-year-old daughter, Gisella, who sat wtih Laura and chattered away gaily in English, though sometimes she couldn't find words fast enough to suit her.

As with most engineers, Polizzi was not talkative. However, I got him to tell us of the problem they had encountered in controlling the water of the marshes. It had baffled the best of them until Polizzi's boss, Signor Natale Prampolini, took hold.

"You see the road we travel." The engineer pointed at the magnificent highway we were following. "It is the famed ancient Roman road, the Appian Way. It used to be flooded by the Pontine Marshes, and malaria spread from them. They cover about one-ninth of all Italy. Before the time of Caesar, the marshes grew larger until the Appian Way became impassable; and their stench made the air unfit to breathe.

"Then Caesar took a hand, and many others, too, but none succeeded over the centuries. At long last, Il Duce"—Polizzi rolled his eyes in awe—"decided that something must be done and placed Prampolini in charge."

Constantini's engineer was a methodical little man. His sallow skin and dull eyes made him look as if he had been in the marshes long enough to get malaria himself. But when talking on his favorite subject, he came alive, his face colored, and his dark eyes shone. He began to rattle off dates, showing

the speed with which Prampolini worked. And so it went, all the way to Littoria, our first stop, until my ears were ringing.

Mile after mile beside the good roads we saw antlike processions of men pushing wheelbarrows of dirt from new drainage canals. Polizzi said 160,000 persons had already moved into the new towns and farmhouses. Within the year, between 60,000 and 70,000 more would have been transplanted from the squalor and overcrowding around Venice in the north to the farms and new towns of Pontino in the south.

Each unit in the development consisted of 140 farms fully equipped with buildings, livestock, and farm implements. Each settler paid half his crop to the government until he got on his feet; then he could buy his farm on a twenty-five-year basis. The main crop was wheat, which was good for a loan at 75 per cent of the market price the day it was delivered to the government granary. Shops in the cities were rented by lot, a public drawing being held to determine who were to be the merchants.

The sources of opposition to this mammoth project of land and human reclamation had a familiar ring to me. The farmers howled that the whole idea was bad because there would be overproduction of food products. Landowners howled that there was enough housing already. When the state offered those who would conform to the development scheme an outright grant of 3.8 per cent of the cost, or to loan them the entire cost at 2½ per cent for forty-five years, practically nobody accepted. So the state had no choice but to do the job itself.

We hadn't forgotten about our little guest, Gisella, who wanted to see the Balilla Camps. The one we visited was on the ocean near Sabaudia. There we met Anna Crisci, officially

in charge of the Opera Nazionale Balilla, who shooed her hundreds of little charges from their barracklike buildings to march in review for us. The boys were all in identical shorts, the girls in white jumpers. They stood rigid as the flag of Italy flew over them from its tall pole near the ocean's edge. On signal, the shrill shout of *"Du-shay, Du-shay, Du-shay, Du-shay, Du-shay!"* burst suddenly upon us and as suddenly stopped.

Anna Crisci didn't seem to be the sort to run such a regimented show. She was middle-aged and motherly, and her dark eyes softened as she let the children break ranks and scamper over the beach to play in the water.

I asked about the inside of the barracks, and she took us to one where a group of four- to six-year-olds were napping. Sleepy eyes turned toward us as they rolled over on their cots to see the visitors from a foreign land. I couldn't resist the temptation to spring my idea of a Fascist salute. A shriek went up, and so did every arm, followed by a pandemonium of childish giggles.

Here were the children from the slums of Rome. They were clean. They were healthy. They seemed to be happy. But they were regimented to within an inch of their lives. Training to be soldiers? I didn't know. But if so, there wouldn't be much individual initiative in the armies of Il Duce.

Hopkins had been right. The Pontine was evidence that much could be done to help people who were badly housed. But it also showed me that great harm could come of it if done under a dictator. I was silent and thoughtful as we drove back to Rome.

6 NOT-SO-GAY VIENNA

WE WERE on our way to Vienna on July 25 when we heard the shocking news that Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss of Austria had been assassinated the day before. This was more than just another political murder, for it reminded the world of the assassination, in 1914, of Archduke Ferdinand, of the same country, which lighted the faggot that started World War I.

I fell into conversation with a fellow passenger, Bronislas Jonasch, an Austrian delegate to the League of Nations. When he learned that I was an American, he had no hesitation in talking about the tragedy, which was on everybody's tongue.

"Yesterday," he said freely, "I was in Venice with my good friend, the Vice-Chancellor of Austria, Prince von Starhemberg. A few days remained of our holiday before the Prince must return to Vienna to be there while the Chancellor was away. You see, Dollfuss was leaving to confer with Mussolini next week. The Prince and I were enjoying ourselves at the Lido when the horrible news came. The Prince, now the Acting Chancellor, flew back to Austria last night."

"What," I inquired, "does this signify?"

"The Nazis are making a *Putsch,*" Jonasch replied em-

phatically. "They did not want to move yet. But when their spies learned that Dollfuss and Mussolini were to have a secret conference, they had to act. They killed Dollfuss to keep him from making a pact between Austria and Italy."

"Does that mean war?"

"No, not now," Jonasch said. "The Nazis are not ready. But they know the people of Austria look to the Italians for help. Hitler had hoped for an *Anschluss* but found that it could not be brought about by peaceful means. So he decided to use force. This is his first step."

We found Vienna under martial law, very tense and with barbed-wire barricades everywhere. World War II was in the making.

After we had unpacked at the Hotel Bristol, I went to see Tom Hughes, commercial attaché at our legation. Despite the crisis, he arranged an appointment with Dr. Musil, the grand old man of Austrian housing, and assigned Boxberg from our legation as my interpreter.

We found Dr. Musil calmly carrying on as though nothing much was happening in the world except the housing of those people who could not house themselves. His genial manner, wide blue eyes, ruddy round face topped by a bulging forehead, and squat frame combined to make him seem like a friendly genie straight from a book of children's fairy tales.

Instead of needing to ask questions to get Musil going, I found him way ahead of me. He began to reel off figures by the yard. I interrupted at the first chance and said that, while I appreciated his desire to help me, a lot of his time would be saved if he just gave me some published information covering the statistics. Dr. Musil was such an international authority on housing that I wanted to hear his own experiences rather than someone else's figures.

"Has your basic policy on housing," I inquired, "varied with changing governments?"

"No, of course not," he unhesitatingly replied. "The fact that poor people do not have enough money to pay for decent housing, and if left in slums menace the state, is so generally admitted by all political parties that I wonder why you ask?"

"I raised the question," I explained, "because in America private business does the housing and feels that government should keep entirely out of the field. The argument is that even slum clearance by the state will eventually lead to socialism or Bolshevism."

"That is very interesting," Musil said, "because it was our own fear of Bolshevism that stimulated the housing program. You see, Austria is dependent on export trade. Yet it must compete with other countries that are protected by tariffs, and also have great advantages in raw materials and modern machinery. These difficulties are partly met by paying low wages. But to pay low wages and still keep workmen satisfied, you must keep their rent low, too. With no export trade after the World War, and with much of our territory taken from us, we were forced to an internal economy. And we had to move quickly. Our population was steadily falling. People left because there were no jobs. Many of those who stayed were unemployed. Social and political unrest invited the Russians. The only way to keep Bolshevism out was to make jobs."

"And construction," I put in, knowing the answer, "makes more jobs than any other form of endeavor."

"Yes," Dr. Musil agreed. "Even with a decrease in population, we needed more homes because those who left the country were mostly single people. And besides, the many marriages after the war—when the soldiers came home—had greatly increased the number of families. Then, too, there

was terrible misery in the Vienna slums. Three-quarters of our houses were of one room, and a small room at that. High rents forced many families to take in lodgers. Conditions were so bad that we converted troop barracks into housing. So, you see, there was the economic reason. But the political reason was even more pressing. The people were beginning to feel that any change would be better than what they had. Revolution threatened. Bolshevism.

"We reasoned," Dr. Musil continued, "that if people had decent homes at rents they could afford, the rising clamor for change would die down because our citizens would be more content. If the family is the foundation of the state, then it is the function of government to see that healthy, happy family life goes on. And to save ourselves, we had to work fast. Rents were so high that they frequently took over half of the workmen's wages. The government had to step in. The program went so well that more than 64,000 houses have been completed. It was through such a program that we escaped Bolshevism.

"While housing bridged the gap in our economy for over a decade, it is not a device that can be used forever. With our building program nearly complete, and with export trade not revived because of world conditions, we still have about thirty per cent unemployed. Agitators are busy among our people again. The lamentable assassination of our Chancellor is tragic evidence of the way things are going."

I expressed my sincere regrets and asked Dr. Musil just one more question.

"Where does the money come from for all this housing with Austria's economy so depressed?"

"It comes," he replied, "from what we call the *Wohnbausteuer*, or housing tax. This tax is graduated so that the people who have lavish homes pay the highest rate, and

those who have frugal homes pay the lowest rate. Last year it worked out so that the rent tax from the tenants of the eighty-six most expensive apartment buildings just about equaled that paid by 350,000 workers. The *Wohnbausteuer* has produced enough revenue so that our housing program has been carried out entirely without loans."

My head was beginning to spin. This method of financing sounded like a sleight-of-hand performance and would bear looking into. But I did not want to take any more of the friendly doctor's time and said good-by with regret. As I glanced back, I glimpsed the grand old man of housing, Herr Doctor Engineer Musil, dully staring out the window.

The burial of the late Chancellor of the Austrian Republic the next day was without disturbance, but it held all the drama of the ages. Arriving at the place reserved for the Legation of the United States, we found that our seats were almost beside the casket. It was soon borne to a gun carriage and, behind eight black horses, slowly moved away. The measured thump, thump, thump of the death march beat beneath the funeral dirge and the muffled drums. The great bell of St. Stephen's Cathedral—cast in 1683 from Turkish cannon—tolled its booming note for hours. The air seemed to vibrate with an overwhelming sense of imminent danger. What would become of this country and traditionally gay Vienna, now steeped in sorrow? Even greater tragedy awaited its people.

With Austria in mourning, I had some spare time on my hands and spent it in studying the material Dr. Musil had given me on the *Wohnbausteuer.* Its basic principle was that those who spend more money on their living quarters must pay higher taxes. In the ten years since its inception it had produced over $100,000,000. For three of these years a total

of $13,000,000 was spent annually for housing. This equaled 20 per cent of the city's entire revenue. *Wohnbausteuer* tax rates ranged all the way from about $.40 to $25.00 a month.

Landlords were prohibited from absorbing this tax and were paid 10 per cent to act as agents of the government in its collection, not exceeding $5.00 a month. Business interests argued that the money for housing should not have been taken from taxes but should have been financed by loans.

The proponents of the *Wohnbausteuer* countered that rents must be kept so low that income would not carry the capital charges; that in the final analysis the funds must come from tax moneys, so why burden the projects with the additional costs of interest and amortization? And, anyway, where would they get the loan needed? That seemed a valid question, for private business had been letting housing strictly alone.

With no capital charges to meet, tenants paid only enough to cover the necessary services: water, sewer tax, chimney cleaning, lighting of public space, insurance, maintenance of buildings and grounds, plus the cost of administration. This made the monthly rent per living unit about $3.70 on a typical workman's accommodation of approximately 400 square feet, including anteroom, toilet, one large living-sleeping room, and a combined kitchen-dining room.

On Monday, July 30, Boxberg and I got going early, because I had only a day in which to see Vienna's urban housing in the morning and the suburban after luncheon. Our first stop was the Karl Marx Hof, a mile-long building arcaded over intersecting streets. The structure was like a continuous chain with links forming spacious interior playgrounds and gardens. The six thousand residents of this immense building comprised a nearly complete community under one roof.

Women were gossiping over the mechanical washers in the laundries, running their clothes through the great steam mangles, hanging their wash in the gas driers. Children were studying and playing in the kindergarten we visited, which was furnished much like those we had seen in Italy. A miniature home was set up in the center of the room. The *Fräulein* in charge was teaching a group how to keep the playhouse clean.

Next we drove to the even larger George Washington Hof. What extremes in political ideology, I thought with a smile—George Washington and Karl Marx. Of less severe architectural design, the George Washington Hof housed ten thousand people. Every flat had a balcony and at least one room that caught the sun. The central wading and swimming pools were used for ice skating in season.

During lunch I was told of the brickyards, sand pits, and limestone quarries the city owned; how streetcars, as well as trucks, were used to transport materials; and of the way contracts were let by competitive bids, with the Gesiba, the wholly owned municipal corporation, furnishing all building supplies.

As we drove to Leopoldau, designed by Richard Bauer, a great houser of middle Europe, I learned that so much unemployment and such a drastic shortage of food had faced Austria in 1919 that about a thousand subsistence homesteads were built in the suburbs of Austrian cities. Lack of funds, and protests by farm organizations that the projects would compete with them, slowed up the program, but it was revived, because of returning unemployment, in 1932.

By this time we were approaching acres of green meadows, fruit trees, and cottages. Started just two years before, Leopoldau now had 425 completed homesteads. The cottages were built in pairs, straddling lot lines to save one exterior

wall. The front and back of each duplex were of masonry, but the end walls were of wood and easily removable for construction of additions, when needed. A loft remained unfinished for future use.

The tenants furnished much of the labor but worked in groups to prevent too much attention being given to the specific home each would finally occupy. The cost per dwelling had been estimated at $1,019 but ran only $825 because the workers produced 20 per cent greater output building homes for themselves than when previously working for straight wages. That was a little detail well worth remembering.

Each unit had slightly less than one acre, divided one-fifth for the house and flower garden, one-fifth for vegetables, one-fifth for fruit trees, and the remainder for a co-operative cash crop marketed by the community as a whole. This common area was unfenced to facilitate cultivation. Hedges near the homes were flower-bearing to provide food for the honeybees. Lectures on farming were given three times a week.

The settler paid 10 per cent down, which his labor during construction usually produced. There was no interest the first year, 2 per cent the second and third, 3 per cent the fourth and fifth, and from then on 4 per cent until the debt was liquidated. These payments included 1 per cent for amortization.

The people were all busy and happy, the children active and gay. Every home was wide open to us. The many we looked in at random were well maintained.

After a full day, which kept me busy taking notes, I invited my host, Doctor Engineer Herman Neubacher, director general of Vienna's public housing, and his assistants to have a "quickie" before parting. While at the Bristol bar, Neubacher

glanced at a late newspaper and turned to me with a wry smile.

"I am now in jail," he quietly observed. "According to this paper, I am in the custody of the police for involvement in the Nazi *Putsch* that resulted in the Chancellor's assassination."

"Impossible!" his assistants exclaimed.

I was nonplused at this surprising turn of events and could only suggest another drink. It was, however, politely refused, and everyone clammed up. Much later I learned the complete story. Dr. Neubacher was arrested and thrown into a concentration camp for more than eighteen months. Following the *Anschluss,* he became the first mayor of Vienna under the Nazis.

So perhaps Dr. Neubacher had not been quite as calm as he seemed when he read me the account of his arrest.

7 MOSCOW MENU

WE STOPPED in Warsaw en route from Vienna to Moscow. Although the war had ended sixteen years before, its destruction was still evident on every hand. Thousands were living in barracklike buildings with a dozen people to each room. Less than 7 per cent of the rent money was being collected. Poland, from our quick glance, was a shambles. On the edge of the city a few multistory apartments were going up, but that was about all.

We crossed the border and transferred to a Russian train on its wide-gauge rails. Entering the diner that evening, we were handed an eight-page menu on newsprint between stiff covers. The various items were printed in columns of Russian, English, and French. I counted sixty-three varieties of hors d'oeuvres, thirty-one soups, eggs in every possible style, including *foo yung*. Also listed were all kinds of meats, fowl, fish, cheeses, and sweets. The untidy tablecloth and napkins were ragged. Unappetizing odors came from behind a half partition that hid a wood-burning cookstove. So this was the crack Negoreloje-Moskau Express!

"What a wonderful choice of soups!" Laura exclaimed hungrily. "The Russian borsch ought to be best. Let's try that."

When a waiter in keeping with the unkempt diner came for our order, I asked for the hot borsch, but he shook his head.

"Vegetable soup?" I inquired.

Again he shook his head.

"Bean soup?"

"No."

"What kind of soup do you have?"

"No soup."

That took care of the thirty-one soups. Laura examined the menu and then looked up at the waiter hopefully.

"Do you have any eggs?"

"No eggs."

"Fish?" Laura asked.

I knew the answer to that one. "No fish."

"Well," I said as I realized that the menu was expressly printed as propaganda for the outside world, "what *do* you have to eat?"

"Stew."

"Anything else?"

"Bread."

"Anything else?"

"Tea."

We told the waiter to shoot the works.

The stew came in broken-handled skillets direct from the stove and was served without plates. Each portion consisted of a single lump of meat and one boiled potato. They looked so unsavory that I thought a snort of vodka might help to get them down.

Oh, yes, they had vodka, both the wheat and the potato variety. I asked the waiter to bring what he thought best, as Laura and I had never tasted it. Having observed, the day before in Warsaw, how Soviet aviators and Polish officials

toasted each other back and forth, we knew that vodka was taken neat. So when our liqueur-sized glasses were served, we followed the custom.

The first taste was not unlike Georgia corn whisky, which slowly trickles with a warm glow to the stomach. But the similarity ended there, for the vodka never seemed to reach the digestive system. It started down the throat and then exploded in the esophagus.

That menu was typical of Russia. Its bountiful variety of entrees were simply meant to show what it would be nice to have—if they only had it. But they did not expect you to be such a fool as to believe that they really did have it—once you were inside Russia and could see for yourself.

Back in our compartment we found that the fumes of tea, samovars, Russian tobacco, and the Russians themselves, had us gasping for fresh air, so I raised the window for the night. On awakening the next morning, our whole compartment had turned from nondescript green to reddish brown. All that could be seen of my wife in the lower berth was the moist outline of two closed eyes. Everything else blended in the dust from the steppes of Russia that had blown in during the night. We dug ourselves out and fled to a breakfast of caviar, black bread, and tea.

At the station in Moscow, barefooted women took over the train. They, instead of men, were the wheel tappers, brakemen, and general utility crew. A fleet of ancient Lincolns had been provided by Intourist, the Soviet Travel Bureau, to handle the passengers from their "crack" train. The man and wife who had been in the compartment next to ours objected as much as we did when porters started to put the luggage in one Lincoln and a lot more of us in another. We didn't want the luggage out of our sight, and as the other couple was also headed for the Hotel Metropole,

we arranged that the four of us, with our joint luggage, would be transported in one Lincoln.

Thus we stood next to each other while in line to show our passports when registering at the hotel. The wife of the Russian became increasingly nervous as we waited. Finally she asked Laura to step aside with her for a moment, and I watched as they conversed in whispers. When they resumed their places, the Russian woman seemed more at ease. My wife later explained to me that the woman wanted to tell Laura that her traveling companion was not yet her husband, so that Laura would not be surprised when they registered under different names.

Russia was living up to advance notice of unorthodoxy in many ways.

Polished, gracious Loy W. Henderson, secretary of the Embassy, welcomed us. After the usual felicitations, he said he had just the man for our guide and interpreter—Philip Bender, on the Embassy staff although a member of the Russian secret service. We, of course, weren't supposed to know that he belonged to the OGPU. Anyhow, Henderson explained, it was especially helpful to have a guide with inside connections because he could take us where an official with less influence would hesitate to venture.

Then I visited with egg-bald, grinning William C. Bullitt, our first ambassador to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. That afternoon, he said, he was presenting baseball equipment to the Russians, and there would be a game. The Embassy staff would play, and I was asked to help them out.

After lunch, Bullitt drove Laura and me to the playing field, which looked like a hastily refurbished city dump. Though awkward with the bat at first, the Soviet team soon

caught on. The Ambassador showed flashes of his former skill at Yale. No accurate score of runs was kept; it was that sort of game. I soon withdrew from active play to take movies, as no one else was recording the first game of baseball in Russia. Formal presentation of the equipment to the Russians by the Ambassador ended the afternoon's sport.

That night after dinner, Laura and I went to the Park of Culture and Rest, the northern sun still shining, to watch the people of Moscow at play. At the entrance, two gardens were so planted with small, contrasting flowers on a hillside slope that they formed easel-like pictures of Stalin and Kaganovich, his brother-in-law. The few people in the park stood and gaped more than they used the primitive paraphernalia provided for their amusement.

The most popular device was a spar about the size of a telephone pole. Two six-foot uprights kept one end of the spar about shoulder-high above the ground, with a steel rod through its butt. The other end rested in a crutch of similar uprights. But instead of a steel rod piercing the pole to support it, this end lay on what was obviously an old inner tube. The tip of the spar was fitted with an eighteen-inch board and a leather harness that passed over the user's shoulders and between his legs to secure his chest against the board. When he was strapped in place, willing helpers pulled the spar down on the inner tube as far as it would go in its slingshot crutch, then released it with a shove, and the rider found himself flying through the air with the greatest of ease in a perfect parabola on the tip of the spar. When he was past the zenith and coming down in an arc, I glanced to see where the poor fellow's head would crash to earth. At that point stood another mammoth slingshot uncocked, and down came the spar on that inner tube. It gave to within a

couple of feet of the ground, then snapped into place, and the rider circled back to the starting point, where he landed safely on his feet.

Nothing we had yet encountered in Russia seemed normal to us. Certainly not the amusements of the Park of Culture and Rest. Nor the subway construction, which had resulted in sunken pavements throughout the city. To add to our bewilderment, when we returned to the Hotel Metropole we found a shirt-sleeved orchestra playing in the ornate central court where the elite of Moscow, in full evening dress, were sitting down at midnight for their main meal of the day.

The next day I started digging into the story of housing and found that a general program did not get under way until 1928, eleven years after the Revolution. By that time any sort of shelter was better than none at all.

Henderson had a schedule arranged that Bender and I followed. F. P. Tockmechev, president of the Moscow Housing Co-operative, took us around. He was a friendly, seemingly harmless fellow, and I got a kick out of the way his pride kept letting the cat out of the bag.

He related with great gusto how the state encouraged workers to save money for a 10 per cent down payment on a co-operative housing project. The state would then put up the remaining 90 per cent at 1 per cent interest and 90 years' amortization. That is, 10 per cent down and 90 years to pay.

Tockmechev went on to prove how well the co-operative scheme was going by citing worker response. They liked the idea so much, it seemed, that many had saved, not a mere 10 per cent, or a miserly 20 per cent, but the whole 100 per cent. What did the American gentleman think of that? Wasn't it wonderful!

I had my doubts, so I innocently inquired where were these co-operative projects that had been built.

The President of the Moscow Housing Co-operative blandly admitted that there were none. The state, unfortunately, had been unable to carry out its part of the deal since it was unable to obtain the necessary materials.

Tockmechev's glee over the savings that had as yet produced no apartments for those who had saved ten times the down payment, reminded me of the eight-page menu on the "crack" Russian train. The workers had no homes, and the dining car had no food.

Tockmechev explained that since all land was owned by the state, there was no charge for land use and no taxes; no interest during construction; no common kitchens or baths. Then another "fact" popped out of his hat. He said that by law the "sanitary norm" was not less than nine square meters, ninety square feet, per person. That was another juicy item that wasn't on the menu, for I remembered figuring out from my study of the Russians' own published reports that their housing projects averaged but thirty square feet per person. That's just room enough for a single cot with a space two by six left over for living, cooking, eating, and bathing.

The first project we visited had five-story, walk-up buildings that covered about 20 per cent of the site. The open spaces were crossed by dirt walks. Untended masses of ragged flowering shrubs were hemmed round by bark-covered log rails. Here and there were benches under the trees.

Near the apartments were unpainted picket fences on which knee-high felt boots were drying. Bedraggled women shuffled along the dusty paths. They wore dark-colored aprons over long skirts and under heavy, shoddy jackets. What looked like dustcloths were wound around their heads.

Then we visited a crèche, or "red corner." The building was of wood, unsealed, and it was dark within. The children were pasty-faced and dull-eyed, and though Laura tried to prompt them, not one smiled. There was no color in the single room; not even a picture of Stalin on the wall. The few tables were bare boards, and there were not enough castoff chairs to go round. It was a depressing scene, and we were relieved when we left.

Next we inspected an apartment building that Tockmechev, surprisingly enough, suggested I choose at random. Plaster was peeling from the walls of the narrow, unpainted concrete stairs. The apartment we entered was better than its outside promised. Though drab and unattractive, there was more space than I had anticipated; at least, so it seemed in the main living room. In addition, there was a combination kitchen and dining room, plus a bath. An elderly woman was at home; her daughter and son-in-law were at work; her two young grandchildren at the crèche. That made three adults and two youngsters living in two rooms. On leaving, I glimpsed several folding cots stowed away under one of the beds.

As we went to the fifth-floor laundry—clothes were dried on the roof—I asked Tockmechev about tenant selection. He said it was on the basis of need. Rents were 10–20 per cent of income. But just a moment; he wanted to correct his statement about tenant selection. It wasn't always given to those who most needed it. Housing was also used as an incentive to get workers to produce more. Factories had signs saying that more productive workers would get higher pay and better housing.

We found the laundry crowded with dilapidated, obsolete machinery and driers. The cossack-bloused manager shrugged and said that the laundry was not much used, anyway. From

what Laura and I had seen of the homes and the people, this was not hard to believe.

I found Bender's presence especially helpful the next day when I photographed Lenin's tomb in Red Square. Just the month before, Ambassador Bullitt's secretary had been arrested, held in police court for over an hour, and had the film she had snapped of the tomb taken from her because she had neither a permit nor a member of the OGPU accompanying her.

When we came up to the entrance of the massive sepulcher, Bender said a few words in Russian to the statuelike guards, and they instantly stopped the long, shuffling line of people filing past the mummified body of Lenin. The picture-taking over, we went down the broad steps into the crypt. The marble walls of the stairway were of an ultramarine shade I have never seen before or since. It was highly polished and translucent with blue-white facets that sparkled like diamonds in the indirect light. Lenin's body reminded me of the wax figures at Madame Tussaud's in London.

The following morning, Loy Henderson asked if I would be willing to confer with the Russians charged with building the Palace of the Soviets. As it was to be a gigantic, office-building type of structure, the architect was anxious to get the ideas of a man in that business from America.

It so happened that while president of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers of the United States and Canada in 1931, I'd had official correspondence with the Amtorg Corporation, the trading company for Russia, about the use of our association's professional services in the design of office buildings. But nothing had come of it.

To go into the problems of the Palace of the Soviets with Russian officials would be interesting but, it seemed to me, of little value. However, an appointment was made, and later in the week, I had a session, which lasted for hours, with Boris M. Yofan, chief architect for the construction of the Palace of the Soviets by the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the U.S.S.R. The Russians went in for window dressing even with their titles.

Yofan brought in a lot of his associates for our conference. While he understood English fairly well and spoke it indifferently, from the vacant looks of his helpers as the hours dragged by, I doubted if any of them had the slightest idea of what was going on. As for me, I was soon bored stiff. As usual, the Russians were talking big plans and having only a hazy idea of how to go about them. At one point I asked Yofan about the design of the interior.

"The Great Hall," he replied, "will seat 21,000 people, be 459 feet in diameter, and 328 feet high with no columns."

"But where in the building is this Great Hall to be?"

"In the middle."

"You mean that a 1,365-foot-high building will be erected around and above the Great Hall?"

"Certainly," Yofan replied without hesitation.

"How about carrying without columns all that superstructure over the clean span of the 459-foot diameter of the Great Hall?"

"We think it can be done by proper distribution of the weight. What we are not sure of is how to design the foundations. You see, the subsoil of Moscow is affected by the Moscow River. Lately we have had some trouble in our subway construction."

I knew about that little matter. I had seen the caved-in streets in the center of the city while walking from the

Metropole Hotel to our Embassy. Nobody seemed to pay any attention to the sunken pavements, and traffic simply avoided those particular streets. I later learned that the superintendents of subway construction had been summarily tried, some of them shot, and the rest sent off to Siberia for counter-revolutionary activities. In this case the poor devils had really been convicted for not knowing how to build a subway, which wasn't surprising since they had never built one before.

That was the "trouble" in subway construction to which Yofan referred. Now in building the Palace of the Soviets, he was obviously worrying about his own skin. But it was none of my affair, and I was glad when I was at last able to get away.

Why the Russians should be wasting time and energy on such a weird project as the Palace of the Soviets instead of sticking to the crying need for housing was beyond me. And why were they building a subway when their transportation problem could not compare with their housing problem? There was no more reason for the subway, which went nowhere in particular, than for the Palace of the Soviets. The specifications for the Palace reminded me again of the elaborate menu and the foodless dining car. Window dressing.

Our departure from Moscow had been scheduled for August 7, but the Intourist Bureau notified us that our reservations were for the following day.

When I asked the stolid woman clerk at the Metropole for our passport, she seemed amazed.

"But, Mr. Palmer, I do not have your passport."

"Don't have our passport?" I said in surprise. "It was left here, as required, when we registered."

"Yes," she admitted, "that is true. But we are required

to send all passports to the municipal government of Moscow, the Mossoviet, to be examined. That's where yours is now."

"All right, let's send over and get it," I suggested. "There is plenty of time before the train leaves this evening."

"But that is impossible," the clerk declared. "Today is a Rest Day, the Mossoviet is closed. No one can get your passport, and you will have to wait until tomorrow."

Here was trouble for sure. It would mean another day lost from the all too few in Berlin. I was beginning to feel that I couldn't get out of Moscow soon enough. There was no use in arguing with the woman clerk. In this fix, I thought of Bender. I phoned him at the Embassy, and he came over to the hotel at once.

At first the obstinate clerk gave him the same song and dance she had handed me. Then he suddenly switched from English and snapped out a few words in Russian. The woman stiffened, executed an abrupt about-face, and opened a drawer behind her. Without a word of explanation, she yanked out our passport and handed it to Bender. He snatched it from her and passed it to me with a grim smile.

When Laura and I discussed the incident later, we decided that the clerk had forgotten to send our passport to the Mossoviet, and it was too late to correct her mistake when I called for it as the Mossoviet was closed for the Rest Day. Therefore, she would get in trouble if she gave it back to us without the official stamp. But when Bender showed up, she knew that he could get her into even greater trouble. So she had chosen the lesser of two evils: trouble with the Mossoviet rather than with the OGPU.

We were beginning to see another side of these Mongolian, Asiatic people, a people so foreign to us that we could find no common contact with them whatever. All of them seemed to live in perpetual fear. It had always been so, from the

days of the Czars. Survival was uppermost, no matter by what means. Agreements were not expected to be kept if later found to be disadvantageous to either party. It was as much part of the code of the Russian to save his own skin, regardless of his word, as it is part of our code to keep our word, regardless of our skin.

It all summed up to the conclusion that the Russians would do what they considered to be for their own best interests at the time, regardless of pledges, and they expected you to act in the very same way. To follow any other course, such as keeping your word if it would hurt you to do so, was so foreign to their training and experience that to them it was incomprehensible.

As we pulled out of Moscow, I kept thinking of the Russian bear that walked like a man, and of Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein.* They were indeed very much alike.

We found ourselves the only non-Russians on the train. All of the other compartments were occupied by Ambassador Litvinov and his entourage. Here was a chance to observe the upper-crust Russians at close quarters. The best opportunity came at dinner that night.

When we stepped through the door of the diner, the steward held up a hand and growled, *"Verboten."* However, as we saw two unoccupied seats, we chose to ignore his order. Pushing by him, we sat down at a table with another couple who were fairly well dressed in normal continental attire. They glowered at us and continued their meal.

This time there was no eight-page menu for the dinner was table d'hôte. We could tell from the sound that those in back of us were still on the soup course. The pair at our table had arrived at the main entree of fricasseed chicken. After separating the meat from the bones, they piled it on the knife and consumed it in that unorthodox way. It was

not a simple feat since the chicken was covered with a butter gravy.

Laura and I watched them anxiously as they tackled a salad of cucumbers with oil dressing. Surely the slippery cucumbers would slide off the knife. However, they weren't given the chance, for the knife was used as a flipper and, with the mouth held close to the plate, the cucumbers were expertly flipped down the gullet.

After observing the common, bold use of toothpicks—not covertly wielded behind the hand as in most European countries—Laura and I escaped to our compartment without mishap, either from staring at the diners or from having busted in on Litvinov's entourage.

8 BERLIN HOUSING SUBSIDY BUT—

"BECAUSE OF that senseless delay in Moscow," I said to Laura, "I've missed an appointment at the German Foreign Office."

We were in our rooms at the Hotel Adlon in Berlin. Laura was writing to the children and looked up at me archly.

"You were supposed to have a vacation," she pointed out. "Remember, dear?"

"It's not in our luggage," I said with a grin. "Must have forgotten to pack it when we left home."

"Bosh!" she said, and went back to her letter writing.

There was a knock on the door, and in came T. S. Wander from the Nationale Radiator Gesellschaft, a subsidiary of the American Radiator Company, who had very kindly offered to make the rounds with me. Being in the building-supply business and a long-time resident of Berlin, Wander cut many corners in getting at the facts and was an effective and friendly companion, interpreter, and guide.

Our first appointment was with Dr. Adolf Friedrichs, president of one of the largest banks handling real-estate financing. At his office we encountered an even sillier custom than the Fascist salute in Italy. There the stiff arm was confined to official contacts. In Berlin, however, everybody was doing it, doing it, and snapping out, *"Heil Hitler!"*

In morning suit, wing collar, and striped tie, Dr. Friedrichs's informal manner contrasted with his dress. He volunteered that he could be most helpful if he discussed only the part private funds played in financing public housing.

"You might say," he began, "that the Reich subsidizes private institutions to get them to lend money for public housing in much the same way the Reich subsidizes rents. When it is found that tenants cannot pay the normal rent, it is reduced to what they can afford. And for the private lending institutions who claim that they cannot afford to take a risk—many can and should but won't—the Reich removes the risk.

"Here is how it is done," the banker explained. "The Government Unemployment Insurance Company supplies the first 25 per cent, or the risk capital. The next 35 per cent is borrowed from a mortgage bank, which is guaranteed against loss. The remaining 40 per cent comes from a private, unguaranteed loan at 5 per cent. This latter loan holds an underlying lien so secure that 60 per cent of the investment in the entire project would have to be wiped out before any loss could be suffered by private capital."

This big banker was certainly giving us the unvarnished facts, and I listened intently.

"There is an interesting side light," he added. "Many of the private lenders decry the subsidy that keeps rents down. But they never object to the subsidy—and the guarantee of their loans by the government *is* a subsidy—that keeps private capital flowing into public housing."

"Are you familiar," I asked this enlightened capitalist, "with the terms of the National Housing Act, which established a Federal Housing Administration in the United States last June?"

"Only in general," he replied. "It guarantees loans, too, doesn't it?"

"Yes," I said. "The credit of our government is pledged for much more than the 60 per cent your government assumes. But our law requires that an insurance fund be built up through premiums paid by the borrowers. It is believed that this fund will furnish enough protection to forestall any call on the government guarantee. However, without the pledge of federal credit in the first place, the securities of the Federal Housing Administration would have no market. So it gets back to the same situation in both countries—private funds flowing into housing only when guaranteed by the government. Do you, Dr. Friedrichs, have a like arrangement?"

"No, we haven't," he replied. "But let me ask you, if the insurance fund built up by premiums from the borrowers will prove adequate to protect your government, why didn't your private moneylending institutions adopt the device first and keep the government out of their field?"

Why not, I had often wondered myself.

"It has always been my impression," he went on, "that capitalists in America feel the less the government has to do with them the better. But it may well be in the United States, as in Germany, that the viewpoint of private business is largely influenced by forces it won't admit are there. I mean that when afraid to take the risk itself, private business welcomes the government carrying that risk so long as private business gets the returns. On the other hand, if the government tries to keep any of the returns for itself, private business claims interference in its field. Frankly, I can't see what the outcome will be of this reluctance on the part of private capital to assume the normal risks it has assumed in the past. But here in Germany the result seems inevitable—more and

more government in business, for which business can only blame itself."

Wander and I drove to our next appointment and found the major interest of Dr. Friedrich Schmidt, the Minister of Works, was slum clearance.

"We can make more jobs with housing than with anything else!" he exclaimed with conviction. "And when we combine housing with slum clearance, we have the perfect made-work program—making better homes and making better people! Making better homes gives employment, not just where you build, but where the materials come from, too—the forests, the quarries, the brickyards, the steelworks, and on the railroads that transport the materials." Dr. Schmidt's clear, gray-blue eyes shone behind thick glasses. "And slum clearance makes better people, especially the children. Sometimes the old folks are too set in their ways to be reclaimed, but not the children. They are like little plants. Move them from the polluted, sour soil of the slums to the clean, fresh earth of new housing, and they react as all living organisms do to the sunshine. They bloom!"

After this poetic outburst, Dr. Schmidt gave us lots of facts and figures before I returned to the Adlon.

I found a letter there from Clark Howell, which reported that Techwood continued to drag. "It is slow business," he wrote, "and I doubt that there will be much to show when you return. The best part of it is that the opposition has apparently surrendered to the inevitable, which means that the work will go forward but with the usual government red-tape delay."

Next day Wander took Laura and me to Neue Scholle, a border city development. The homes were of masonry in-

stead of wood, the yards neatly fenced to keep the cows, pigs, chickens, and ducks apart. Plots varied from 6,000 to 10,000 square feet and were well planted with fruit trees and ornamental shrubs. There was no common cash crop, and each family sold its own surplus individually.

Title to all land remained in the city, which gave it control for redevelopment to a different use if and when the need arose. Only a leasehold right was sold to the tenant. Although the leasehold estate could pass by inheritance, it could not be sold. If the tenant wanted to move, the homestead reverted to the city at a reasonable price, thus preventing speculation.

Private capital was "frequently allowed"—in the words of our German informant—to take a 40 per cent first mortgage on the improvements at 4½ per cent plus 1 per cent amortization. The balance, or risk capital, was furnished by the state. This was certainly subsidizing businessmen in a big way, with government taking the first 60 per cent of the risk.

We talked with a fat, jolly housewife standing in the midst of her quacking ducks. She said that she and her husband were able to meet all installments on the homestead from the sale of their vegetables and fowl. There was also enough left over to feed themselves and their three children. Four years before, they had been on relief because her husband was a day laborer with only part-time work. He still couldn't find a steady job, but now when unemployed he kept gainfully busy by helping her on the homestead.

Laura wanted to know how, since they were on relief, they had got together the nest egg for the down payment and the livestock.

They had worked that out, the housewife explained, by helping to construct the buildings, their own and their neighbors'. The money for stocking the place was put up by the state and added to their mortgage. Now, after four years

on the land, they felt reasonably secure. The other families were satisfied, too; in fact, there was a long waiting list.

Next we visited city projects that had been completely financed by public funds, 30 per cent from the Reich and 70 per cent from Berlin. Tenants came from the low-income group, and rents were jointly subsidized by city and state.

Corner balconies were staggered by setbacks in the buildings so that no balcony overlooked another. Built-in flower boxes topped the balcony rails; prizes given for the best accounted for their perfection. Sun decks on the roofs were especially popular as playing areas for the children. Clothes were hung in automatic driers in the laundries.

These laundries were all that the Russians' were not. There was no cluttering of equipment here. More than enough room was left around the giant mangle for a housewife to stand back while feeding sheets into its iron maw. The mechanical washers and rinsers were set up in a step-saving production line. There was no charge for the use of the laundry.

Prussian efficiency had been demonstrated before, but it was easy to see that business and government were way off the track in Germany. Just how far off the track was to slap me in the face as Wander and I visited over a drink in the Adlon bar.

The talk turned to the likelihood of war. There was no doubt that the Germans were getting ready for it. Wander edged closer to me. He was fidgety and glanced over his shoulder.

"Here's what happened yesterday afternoon," he whispered, "to my next-door neighbor, Herr X. He had been talking too much. Nothing really bad, but he criticized some Nazi policies. I told him he shouldn't, no matter how he personally

felt. Well, yesterday afternoon, Herr X was coming home from work, and his little boy, twelve years old, met him. They were walking along, hand in hand, talking about family matters when two Storm Troopers stopped them. No questions were asked. They simply commanded Herr X to go with them immediately.

"When my neighbor wanted to know why, they snapped that he would find out soon enough. They wouldn't let him see his wife first, or tell him where they were taking him. Off they marched with Herr X, while the boy ran home to his mother with the frightening news. Late last night she finally located the police station where her husband had been taken. But he was no longer there. Frantic with fear, she told the Storm Troopers that she would like to provide some blankets for her husband since she had heard that the concentration camps were cold. They replied without compunction that her husband would never need blankets again."

"Is this story true, Wander?" I asked.

"Before God!" he declared. "I talked with the poor woman this morning. If you had been there to listen, you would know it is the truth."

So in hundreds of such human tragedies were the seeds of war sown.

9 CROWDED AS KIPPERS

THE FIRST THING I did when we got to London was to catch up on my correspondence and review the notes made on the Continent.

On the trip to Europe in 1930, the viewpoint of most Continentals seemed at variance with ours—while that of most Englishmen was in harmony—on fundamental questions. It was likely, therefore, that the way England tackled her housing problem would fit in better with American ideas than that of the countries we had just visited. Too many of the slum-clearance methods used in the autocratic countries were at cross-purposes with our democratic process.

My first call was on James Somerville, Jr., our professorial, capable assistant commercial attaché, who, after warm greetings, sat me down with the Embassy files on British housing. He brought my attention particularly to an official notice, dated April 3, 1933, to all Housing Authorities from the British Minister of Health.

"In the view of His Majesty's Government," it began, "the present rate at which the slums are being dealt with is too slow, and they look for a concerted effort between the Central Government and the Local Authorities immediately

concerned to ensure a speedier end to the evil, and an end within a limited time.

"For over twenty years the Local Authorities have had the duty of inspecting and recording the condition of all working-class property in their area. The Local Authority should, therefore, be able to take immediate action."

This was no mere paper pronouncement. It was backed by the Housing Act of 1933, which provided each Local Authority with an annual subsidy of two pounds, five shillings—about eleven dollars then—for forty years for each displaced person rehoused. This was to be matched by the Local Authority with three pounds, fifteen shillings—about eighteen dollars then—per house for the same period. Since the Exchequer grant was on a per-person basis, it gave the Local Authority more money than it had to provide on a per-house basis.

Within a year an excellent start had been made, as shown by the Minister of Health's report to Parliament stating that "these programs provide for the demolition of 254,753 houses and the rehousing of 1,187,173 peoples."

Here seemed to be a plan along democratic instead of demagogic lines. It was the people's program. The local community made the findings and did the job. The central government helped with the subsidy and could prod the laggards.

These reports, however, were from the government. But what about the business viewpoint? Somerville immediately produced the findings of the National Housing Committee. This up-to-the-minute report was from a group of business and professional men exclusively. Its chairman was the Right Honorable Lord Amulree, president of the Building Industry Council of Review.

This unanimous report brought out that the first compul-

sory housing laws were passed in 1850, but the compulsory education act not until some twenty years later; that it was more important to house a child decently than to send him to school four hours a day, then toss him back into a slum for the remaining twenty hours, and expect him to rise above that environment.

The Amulree Committee, that group of private enterprisers, then spoke for itself:

"Fit and proper housing is a national essential, in the absence of which our existing social legislation must prove unfruitful. As long as overcrowding and slums exist, the doctor is attempting a cure without being able to touch the root of the disease; the teacher has the full force of environment against him; the social reformer is fighting a battle in which he cannot hope for decisive victory."

The committee also expressed itself on the economic phase of slums:

"Good housing means less expenditure on prevention of disease, less crime, better benefit for education, less unemployability as opposed to unemployment. The elimination of bad conditions has a cash value as well as a moral value to the nation."

Here was a position taken on slum clearance by leaders in building ownership, building finance, and the building materials field of Britain that was exactly opposite to the attitude taken by similar leaders in America. British leaders proclaimed that the only way slums could go was with government aid, while American leaders proclaimed that government should keep out—and stay out.

The next day Ray Atherton, counselor of our Embassy, gave me a new view on a phase of housing.

"Slum clearance has recently become a major interest of my wife's, too," he volunteered. "The Princess of Athlone, and other ladies who take their social work seriously, have been visiting the new housing projects and then the slums to make comparisons. In a new housing development, my wife got a woman to talk quite freely. There were three children in the family, and their mother said it was a relief and a joy to have them on the playing fields instead of in back alleys. There was, however, one worrisome problem. With kids romping in the sunshine all day long, their appetites increased so much that it was difficult to feed them on the limited income of the family."

In this connection, Atherton said he understood that housing estates now had dietitians to advise mothers on how to prepare adequate yet inexpensive menus. In fact, there were so many ways in which the housing projects in Britain were doing constructive work that Atherton found it difficult to comprehend the strong opposition in America.

I explained that in Atlanta the most active opposition came from slum owners, slum mortgage holders, and slum brokers. The rest seemed to be people who had not thought the matter through, or who were unwilling to be convinced, or who believed in every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

"That attitude," Atherton said, tilting back in his chair, "is, unfortunately, rather typical of many American business leaders. I have talked with scores of them as they passed through London in the past decade. They damn anything new in government, no matter how inevitable it may be. Since President Roosevelt took office, their outcry has become much louder. Maybe this is not unnatural. We are still a young nation, and we must learn from experience. The British are an old people. Their business leaders take a more

mature outlook than ours do. When the man in the street over here gets so restless that a change becomes imperative, the leaders don't fight it. On the contrary, they work to bring about the change, get credit for it, and then help guide it.

"Consequently, you will see many upper-class leaders in slum clearance today, such as Sir Basil Blackett, director of the Bank of England, and others. They are not insincere. They are simply determined to help clean up the slums—a job admittedly long past due—rather than let the man in the street get the credit for doing it all by himself. As a result, the upper classes are acclaimed for clearing slums. This technique, which has been in use for well over a century, accounts in substantial measure for the intelligent evolution of Britain without revolution. There is much we in America can learn from this British practice of leading reform movements."

Atherton then mentioned an attack on the slum problem that I hadn't heard about. It was to prohibit overcrowding through limiting by law the number of people in existing dwellings. I wondered how it could be done, so Atherton kindly arranged for me to see John C. Wrigley, assistant secretary of the Ministry of Health.

I went to Whitehall at the appointed hour and was happy to find Mr. Wrigley a kind and understanding official who appreciated and sympathized with the problems we were facing in America. And he would be happy to tell me about the new law on overcrowding.

"Won't dealing with overcrowding by decree," I inquired, "be a new approach difficult to sell to the people?"

"Well, yes and no," he answered, "You see, we have ample precedent in other phases of slum clearance to require the citizen to do right by the state. For a landlord to overcrowd his rental property so that it endangers public health is like

letting physical property deteriorate so that its occupants contract typhoid because of bad drains, or bad plumbing, as you in America would say. This, it seems to me is the same reasoning you use in your pure-food laws.

"For example, I believe that the butcher in America violates the law if he sells rotten meat, the dairyman if he sells impure milk. And over here, we say that the landlord is a similar lawbreaker when he rents insanitary housing. We even carry that principle through when we buy his property. For if a building is unfit for human habitation, we pay only the value of the land as a cleared site. In other words, we do not include the decayed building any more than you would include the decayed meat when buying a butcher business in the States.

"Nor do we consider income in appraising slum property. To capitalize rent from an insanitary dwelling would be like capitalizing the income from the sale of bad meat. And we consider the owner lucky not to be in jail for having exploited the housing on the site for so many years after its decay.

"You may care to hear the reasons that convinced the present government that an overcrowding law was needed. Although we built many new houses after the Armistice, our 1931 census showed nearly three million people living more than two persons to a room, including kitchens. The idea that all those houses we had built would bring about a gradual filtering up of the population, and that bad housing and overcrowding would automatically disappear, didn't work."

So it didn't work, eh? I was reminded of Allievi's "filtering up" theory, and this incontrovertible proof of how wrong that wonderful old Roman gentleman was.

"In looking for a solution," Wrigley continued, "we found that, in one sense, overcrowding is harder to tackle than slum

clearance. An unfit house, once removed, ceases to be a danger to health. An overcrowded house may well be, of itself, a perfectly fit house and continue as adequate housing after being 'decrowded.' But the benefits of decrowding are entirely lost if the return to overcrowding is not prevented for the future. Thus to propose a remedy short of permanent prevention is merely straightening out one dent in a rubber ball by making another."

The analogy was certainly apt and brought up a pertinent question. "Decrowding seems logical enough," I said, "but how do you plan to accommodate the people who are ejected?"

"We haven't yet worked that out," Wrigley admitted. "We shan't know the extent of the problem until the Local Authorities complete the overcrowding surveys. We are inserting safeguards so that existing overcrowding will not be penalized until suitable alternative housing is available.

"In concluding that overcrowding can only be dealt with as an offense, it was necessary to establish measurable standards. These will relate to separation of the sexes and adequacy of space. The penalties will render both landlord and tenant liable for any violations. Primary responsibility for the program will rest on the Local Authority. Ample financial aid for surveys and enforcement will be forthcoming."

I would have loved to ramble on for hours but at the first opportunity I thanked him profusely and made my getaway.

On the way back to the hotel, I picked up the pictures taken in Russia. Ambassador Bullitt wanted some shots of the baseball game for use in Russian newspapers. I dispatched them and later learned that they were used in introducing baseball into the next Five-Year Plan.

I then visited Major Harry Barnes, former president of the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was as rugged an advocate of slum clearance as he was rugged in appearance.

His great hands, broad shoulders, and shaggy head combined to give him the drive that had produced important buildings and aided in the preparation of significant housing legislation. He had also written *The Slum, Its Story and Solution.*

"We think we are doing quite well in clearing slums," he began, "but the people don't agree with us. Their slogan, you may have heard, was 'Up with the houses; down with the slums.' They claimed that there was not enough done, although the London County Council had cleared hundreds of acres of slums and built tens of thousands of houses. Why, one L.C.C. project, Becontree, is the largest municipal housing estate in the world. It covers an area four times as big as the square mile that forms the City of London. It houses more than 25,000 working-class families—about 120,000 people —who formerly lived in the slums of London.

"Yet the voters still said, 'Not enough done,' and they were right. There was nothing for it but to move even faster. The Act of 1933 is speeding up laggard towns. It gives the Minister of Health the power to order inquiries where proper schemes for slum clearance are not submitted promptly. The Minister has recently called about a dozen such towns on the carpet. So far so good. We are creeping a little faster. But we will never reach full speed until we decide that housing is every bit as important as education. We must do for housing what was done for education back in 1870—make it compulsory instead of permissive."

It was obvious that Major Barnes was a fighter from the word go. He said that he had prepared an amendment to put teeth into the housing laws.

"The reason we must make decent housing mandatory," he explained, "is because that's the only way poor people can get it. Generations of experience offer proof positive that there is no money in housing the poorest people well, while

there has always been money in housing them ill. Those who house them ill make so much money that they don't want the slums to go, but the movement here in England rolled over them long ago."

I sighed at the thought of the fight we'd had to put up in Atlanta. And I had the feeling that the battle was far from over.

"With no money in housing the poorest people well," Major Barnes continued, "they must be housed at whatever rents they can afford to pay. That's where subsidy comes in. That's why a statutory provision to provide a separate dwelling for every family is needed as much as the one that provides a place in school for every child."

"If the poor are housed at the rent they can afford to pay," I said, "does that mean some families pay less rent than others for identical housing?"

"Exactly!" Major Barnes beamed. "And that is as it should be. When a poor man goes to hospital he is charged less for the same operation than a man of means. That principle when applied to housing is called 'differential renting.' The city of Leeds employs it with great success, and it is spreading. I would make it compulsory in all public housing."

These Britishers were shooting the facts to me so fast that I was getting dizzy. On leaving Major Barnes, I dashed down the steps and ran toward a taxi stand in the middle of the street, subconsciously glancing to the left for oncoming traffic. There was a shouted curse and a swish of rubber as a car from the right nearly knocked me over. The driver of the cab I entered had seen my narrow escape.

"Can't you Americans," he tartly remarked, "ever learn that we drive on the left over here? Serves you right, seems to me."

Since he had me dead to rights, I made no comment as I was taken to the apartment of Lewis Silkin, chairman of the

Housing and Public Health Committee of the London County Council.

Courtly, swarthy, slightly stooped Silkin came forward slowly to shake hands. The elegance of his drawing room was more oriental than occidental. It fitted him well, for there was much of the mystic about the man. His dark eyes were heavily lidded. The loose mouth under his bulbous nose parted in a slight smile. Faint though it was, it changed his whole aspect. His expression lost its dour look and became warmly cordial.

Over a glass of sherry—it was teatime—Silkin personified the cultured, gracious host. Here was a man who was a writer and a doer, with no time for play. His Fabian pamphlets on the ills of England were internationally known. His accomplishments in his present post had taken a lot of action in his patient, persuasive way.

"With your practical interest in politics, Mr. Silkin," I led off, "do you find that constituents plague you for preferential treatment in public housing?"

"I guess the world in that regard," he replied, "is the same everywhere. Now and then I am asked to help. But political influence does not go with the housing managers. They are all under civil service, and if an applicant tried political pressure, he would be shown the door. Selections are made entirely by merit alone."

"How about when it comes to letting contracts for construction?"

"That, too, is free of politics. The jobs are awarded through sealed bids. We use a method that may be new to you in America. Instead of inviting bids on the over-all cost, we ask for bids just on the contractor's fee, agreeing to pay all labor, material, equipment bills, and carrying charges ourselves. The contractors are furnished with complete quantity

surveys, which are carefully prepared. They then submit their fee bids on the estimates of the over-all cost. We have found this method unusually satisfactory to both sides, and it has saved us some money."

"What do you think about paying for slum clearance out of current revenue, as in Vienna, instead of borrowing the money and amortizing the loans over fifty or sixty years?"

"I think the long-time basis is better," Silkin replied thoughtfully. "The present generation did not make the slums, so they should not pay the entire cost of clearance. Nor will they be the only generation to benefit by the new housing; it is built for future generations, too. Furthermore, if the capital for our program was limited to what we can afford from current revenue, we would be severely limited in our plans of action. On the other hand, the tax money now used to pay interest and amortization on housing loans is not a burden, and it liquidates a much larger program over several generations."

"How do you look at slum clearance as a whole?"

"It should be a partnership between national and local governments. This is logical and best. Political differences have gradually disappeared. All party platforms are against slums, just as they are all against sin."

"How much of a problem is management?"

"It's a big problem," Silkin admitted, "especially when there are sixty-five thousand houses, which is the number we have completed in London and occupied. Rents are collected weekly to keep the payments small, only about ten shillings—two dollars and a half—for a two-bedroom house. Weekly payments also keep down arrearages. Most estates give prizes for the best gardens. In Westminster there are yearly inspections of homes, and housekeeping is rated as clean, fairly

clean, and dirty. Yes, free of politics, management works out very well."

Cushioned by a heavy oriental carpet that formed a pool of rich color as background for the exquisite teakwood furniture, Silkin and I strolled to the reception hall. Beside the entrance door was a Brobdingnagian vase from China. With the natural poise and grace of a potentate, my gracious host bowed from the waist, extended a mammoth, swarthy hand, and wished me a pleasant voyage home with the hope that I would return to England soon.

That was exactly what I wished for. First, some time in America to share what the British were doing in slum clearance. Then I wanted to come back to England to absorb more of their valuable experience to apply in our country.

10 "THE WAY OUT"

WHILE WE were making the Atlantic crossing on the *Statendam,* we looked forward to some restful, lazy days. However, it was a rough trip with high seas often breaking over the bridge. So I stayed in our cabin and worked on the promised report for Harry Hopkins.

He would learn more from my movies in five minutes than from a fifty-page report. However, to edit and title the film would take time, and I wanted to get something to him right away. So I decided to write an outline of policies with just enough background to substantiate my conclusions. Later on, the movie would furnish the particulars.

We should take from the experience of Europe only that which would work in a democracy. The report must merit support from all concerned. That support must be assured before submission of legislation to Congress. From the beginning, real-estate interests should be consulted. Properly handled, a public-housing program could win their support, but it could come only through complete understanding.

Co-operation by the church and social workers would be essential to convince the public of the need for such a movement. Capital and labor, too, had common interests in its success. Government itself was the foundation upon which the plan must rest.

This meant that the initiative must come from Washington. The President should bring together that cross section of the nation that would have the greatest interest in slum clearance and public housing. By using the experience in Britain to harmonize conflicting views in America, the United States could develop a slum-clearance program without going through the trial-and-error periods of other countries. By gaining support in advance from all concerned, the movement would be freer from attack than if it were formulated by a few specialists in star-chamber sessions. Then when slum owners and their henchmen tried to distort the plan by cries of unfair competition, others would not be misled so easily as they had been in Atlanta. They would understand beforehand that it costs more to keep slums than to clear them; that slum clearance is not new and untried, but old and proven; and finally, that slum clearance is not socialism but enlightened capitalism.

There was no other nation-wide activity that could make as many jobs as slum clearance. This could really be the way out for Hopkins with his problem of the unemployed. So that is how I headed the report.

"The Way Out" told that healthful housing is the main objective of sincere leaders throughout Europe; that those political parties that carry out slum clearance and rehousing programs to the fullest are the most successful; that some governments compel cities to house their needy citizens properly, just as cities are required to educate all children; that slum clearance is the story of the state's battle against unemployment, disease, vice, hunger, and squalor; that cholera in the slums of Naples became such a threat to the entire city and state that the King of Italy had to wipe out its source, the slum; that tuberculosis in Rome throughout the congested quarters, and the need to make work, caused

action there; that food shortage forced the establishment of subsistence homesteads in Austria, and the threat of Bolshevism because of unemployment prompted the great urban housing in Vienna; that the need for better sanitation and the curse of overcrowding forced the Parliament of England, as early as 1875, to pass laws dealing with slums.

That state aid in Europe to house the poor is so much a part of public policy that the movement is beyond the range of controversy, although political capital is occasionally made by "the outs" when "the ins" fail to carry slum clearance and rehousing far enough; that the U.S. is not free from ills that other nations are remedying through vast housing programs; that any political party in power in Washington is derelict to the degree that it delays an aggressive, nation-wide attack on these troubles; that no experimentation is necessary because the older countries of the world have done the pioneering for us; that impartial analysis by the Housing Division in Washington shows the need for $500,000,000 in New York (only $25,000,000 then available) and $400,000,000 in Chicago (only $20,000,000 then available) to make inroads on the slums of only these two cities. That billions of dollars and millions of men can be constructively employed in a nation-wide battle against the slums.

That while the people should be aroused to the movement by church and state, business and professional men must actually direct and execute it.

That with church and state, employer and employee, working together, it will be possible to accomplish a good for our citizens second only to the preservation of peace.

Hopkins partially rose from behind a battered, flat-top oak desk, shook hands listlessly, plopped back into his chair, and swung both feet to the top of an open drawer. I knew he was

not discourteous, just tired. His eyes were dull, and every movement seemed an effort.

"Glad to see you back," he said without enthusiasm. "How'd you make out? Find anything worth while?"

"There was so much," I replied, "that I had a devil of a job of condensing. Maybe the best way to decide what you want to do is to read the report. It's only a couple of pages long."

Hopkins accepted the report so absent-mindedly that it was plain he would rather talk than read. It looked as though he wouldn't finish the first paragraph, so to get the points over, I read aloud from my copy. Hopkins dropped his, closed his eyes, and listened intently. When I had finished, he bounced erect in his chair and banged a fist on the desk.

"You know," he exclaimed, "we ought to start by getting Henry Wallace steamed up on those subsistence homesteads! He's the Secretary of Agriculture and can help a lot. He knows what we're doing down at Pine Mountain near Warm Springs. But Henry has no more idea of the possibilities than I had until you read me your report. How about the movies you took? Any subsistence homestead projects in them?"

"Yes, and I believe the titles can be written to tell the whole story."

"Let me know as soon as you're ready, and we'll show them to Wallace." Hopkins was all energy now. "But how about slum clearance? It's a lot bigger and a much older movement than I had any idea of."

"It amazed me, too," I said. "Especially the way the British have perfected it. They have the backing of all political parties as well as both capital and labor. What surprised me most was to find leading advocates among bankers and real-estate owners."

"Well," Hopkins wondered, "I don't think we can expect

their co-operation here. Look at all the trouble they've given you on your Atlanta project."

"I'm not so sure they won't help," I ventured. "The great majority of businessmen are reasonable and fair. If we can convince them that slum clearance and subsistence homesteads are good business—and they are—then I feel sure that they will co-operate."

"Well, maybe you're right," Hopkins said doubtfully. "But I haven't had much luck along that line. How would you go about it?"

"Through the presidents of their trade associations," I pointed out. "The President of the United States should invite such leaders to help prepare appropriate legislation. Specifically, the National Association of Building Owners and Managers includes practically all the principal office-building owners in America. Slums hurt their property values, so they should swing into action in a big way. The insurance companies also should play ball because slum clearance lowers the mortality rate and stabilizes mortgages on central real estate besides. The National Association of Real Estate Boards—except for those brokers who manage slum housing—should see the light. The American Institute of Architects, whose members would design the buildings, and the Association of General Contractors, who would construct the buildings, have a very direct interest."

"Anybody else?" Hopkins prodded.

"Yes," I added, "the great church organizations and social workers associations should be represented. It will take time and involve some compromises. But I believe it's best to get those with all points of view around the table first. Then if they can't get together, they at least won't be able to say later that the program was pulled out of a hat without their being heard. Of course, a way to get the money may be the

toughest job. Actually, though, it doesn't take too much. There are various methods that have worked well in England with the support of all interested parties."

But Hopkins showed little interest in the financing. His mind was on the over-all picture.

"Tell you what to do," he said decisively. "Get the film in shape as soon as possible. Then Wallace, you, and I will go over it. He and I may have some suggestions. And then I'd like to have the President see the movie, too, if it can be arranged."

There hadn't been a single interruption, by telephone or otherwise, during our talk. When Hopkins wanted to concentrate, he evidently arranged things accordingly. He was completely devoid of any "front" and, once aroused, gave me his full attention. I left the report with him as we parted.

The next move was mine.

11 ICKES PLAYS WITH DYNAMITE

WHEN I returned to Atlanta, the first job was the preparation of the movie. Eastman Kodak co-operated splendidly by working the night shift.

Then there were the usual speeches before civic groups and travel clubs. Tied into our local slum-clearance program, Europe's record was of more than passing interest. The enthusiasm for my talks confirmed that the plan given to Harry Hopkins was well worth trying.

The government had bought scores of slum properties in the Techwood and University Homes areas during the summer. Demolition was about to start, and Secretary Ickes was coming for appropriate ceremonies on September 29, 1934.

On the twentieth of that month, a distinguished group of overseas housing experts arrived in Atlanta for three days. They had been touring principal American cities for the past month under the auspices of the National Association of Housing Officials. Sir Raymond Unwin, of the Amulree Committee in England, was chairman. He was accompanied by Miss Alice Samuels, representing the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers of Great Britain, and Dr. Ernest Kohn, housing consultant of Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany.

Ernest J. Bohn of Cleveland, president of the National Association of Housing Officials, and Henry Wright, noted architect of New York, completed the party.

Sir Raymond sparked the first meeting with our local officials by saying that America was "striding with seven-league boots" compared with the slow progress of the early days of slum clearance in Britain. He was fully qualified to make the comparison because his services in British housing had won knighthood from the King.

Sir Raymond went on to say that the United States was far ahead of England in minimum standards of free education, but still woefully behind in housing, which, to his way of thinking, was much more fundamental.

"In your program," he continued, "you cannot and should not charge your developments with the cost of the obsolete and decayed slum buildings destroyed. It is just not sound economics. We fix the price of sites on the basis of what a willing buyer will pay a willing seller if the land were zoned for housing."

Sir Raymond's Windsor tie and drooping mustache gave him the appearance of an artist, which he was, but not with a brush. His art was in the field of human understanding of human needs.

"Housing is the magic ingredient of all economics," he said, "for it makes the most jobs. Why, just to build one small dwelling takes a year of man-hours on the site plus a three-quarter year to produce the materials. A million houses means a million, seven hundred and fifty thousand jobs for one year!

"Usually the community in which the need for housing is greatest is least able to finance it, so ample national subsidies are required. These must get the rents so low that the poorest can pay them. This means that we must come to think more

and more in terms of income, and less and less in terms of imaginary capital values. And there is less variance between countries than you might think, isn't there, Dr. Kohn?"

"I agree with Sir Raymond," Kohn barked, "and I say something more. Don't amortize the cost of the land. We don't in Germany. Why should we? Why should you? The land is always there!"

A general discussion followed about relating subsidies to income instead of to capital. Then genial, ample Miss Samuels began discussing management. She'd had charge, since 1928, of 625 houses for the Bebington District Council near Liverpool.

"It is as necessary," she began, "to have trained managers in housing as it is to have trained nurses in hospitals or trained teachers in schools. I do not mean to say that it takes as much training for housing as for nursing or teaching. What I do say is that housing management is much more than simply the collection of rents. Especially is this true when the poor from the slums are your tenants. They need to learn, and they can't learn decent housing without teachers, any more than school children can learn without them.

"Being a woman, you may think me prejudiced when I maintain that women make the best managers. Here are my reasons. The mother is in the house more than the father. She has the direct care of the children. Her confidence must be won on a woman-to-woman basis. That means getting to know each other. It means gaining entry to the house to investigate without snooping. Cleanliness, quarrelsomeness, health, and ability to pay rent—all must be checked, and indirect guidance given. A spot of tea together in the kitchen helps a lot. A man can't be as neighborly with a woman as

another woman. At least, he'd better not when that woman's husband is away all day long.

"The members of our Society of Women Housing Managers in Great Britain think the kind of a job we do is the way it should be done. Some politicians disagree. They'd rather have their male henchmen act as rent collectors in place of trained managers chosen by examination. But, I am happy to say, the politicians do not prevail.

"I think the policy of working with the housewife has proven itself in our project at Bebington. There we have practically no trouble with police being called in, although previously many of these same people had been continuously in the police courts."

Miss Samuels having concluded, Ernest Bohn put in a question.

"Sir Raymond, we have talked about the fact that the inspiration back of our present urge for public housing in America is to find work for the unemployed. Do you consider that should be the primary purpose?"

"It is very important, of course," Sir Raymond replied. "Fundamentally, however, slum clearance is to make better people. Yet it is a fact that England has been able to overcome the industrial depression largely by public housing and the activity of speculative builders for the well-to-do. Expenditures in building operations, one should remember, are widely distributed in purchasing power throughout a community."

The fruitful sessions ended with many better-informed officials and citizens in Atlanta. On the last day of their stay, I was host for a stag dinner in the Capital City Club. Sir Raymond, then in winged collar, at first declined all spirits. However, the green mint leaves topping the silver goblets of Georgia juleps so intrigued the artist in him that he soon

reconsidered. And he found the first julep so easy to take that he had downed another before I could caution him about their potency. But no harm was done; he enjoyed himself immensely and so did we all. Even Dr. Kohn tapped his foot in time to the tunes of the Negro jug band.

The same evening, Laura entertained Miss Samuels at a little dinner in our home. The party was a congenial one, for the guests had much in common with their distinguished visitor. Miss Gay Shepperson, director of WPA in Georgia; Miss Rhoda Kauffman, head of the Family Welfare Society; Miss Florence Read, president of Spelman College, and the others learned much from Miss Samuels, and they all parted firm friends.

The next day, Eastman delivered the completed film, right on time. I had written Hopkins to inquire when he wished to see it. No reply came to the letter or to a follow-up telegram, so I telephoned his efficient secretary, Mrs. Godwin. She immediately worked out arrangements for Hopkins and Wallace to view the film in private at lunch with me at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington on the following Monday. So I packed my bags, kissed Laura good-by, and was on my way again.

Hopkins and Wallace arrived separately but on time. Hopkins came by way of the apartment entrance to avoid being stopped in the lobby, as there were always people around who wanted something from him.

This was my first meeting with Wallace, and I found that he had a disarming, almost boyish smile. His diffidence vanished when the movie showed pictures of Leopoldau in Austria.

"That's what we should emphasize!" he exclaimed. "Subsistence homesteads make the jobs and produce a lot of food

at the same time. Your projects, such as Pine Mountain in Georgia, should be expanded, Harry."

"Yes, I agree," Hopkins replied. "Miss Shepperson has done a big job taking families from relief in Atlanta and resettling them in the homesteads at Pine Mountain. She has also kept about nine hundred men employed building the roads and houses."

"Both of you undoubtedly know," I put in, "that there is a great deal going on in this field under Ickes."

"Yes, I know pretty much about those jobs," Hopkins said somewhat bitterly. "Mrs. Roosevelt and Louis Howe are the ones who really started Arthurdale, and I'm damned glad they're interested. But any big movement like this shouldn't be scattered all over the place. Some projects are being done by Interior, some by WPA, and you've even got some going in Agriculture, haven't you, Henry?"

"Well, yes and no," Wallace replied. "We've been helping, but we have no over-all authority. It seems to me this whole thing should be combined in some sort of Resettlement Administration, probably under the Department of Agriculture."

"I'll play ball with you on that, Henry," Hopkins agreed. "And I think the President would approve. After all, it's up to him. He knows a hell of a lot more about these subsistence homesteads and slum clearance than you'd think. Let's see the rest of the film, Palmer."

I had stopped the projector when Wallace got so interested in the Leopoldau pictures. The afternoon was hot and sunny, so the Venetian blinds were down. Hopkins lounged on the davenport with slats of light and shadow across him, while Wallace leaned forward in a straight-back chair.

When the film was over, Wallace wanted to know exactly how it would be used. Its best use, I suggested, might well be

in proving to the general public that we would miss a good bet in America if we did not do more—much more—on slum clearance.

"What I have in mind," Hopkins said, "is to try to arrange for the President to see it as soon as possible. What do you think, Henry?"

"Absolutely!" Wallace heartily agreed.

"I may be with him next week at Hyde Park," Hopkins informed us. "I'll keep in touch with you, Palmer."

Hopkins left as he came, by the side entrance. Wallace talked a few minutes longer about emphasis on subsistence homesteads and then went back to his office, promising to co-operate in every way.

The next few days in Washington were spent in conferences with Colonel Horatio B. Hackett, director of Housing, and his associates, discussing the lessons learned in Europe. Arrangements were also completed for Secretary Ickes's visit to Atlanta, when the first slum buildings would be wrecked.

Ickes arrived on Sepember 29, with Director of Housing Hackett and Mike Straus, Public Relations director. Shortly thereafter, two dynamite blasts echoed the news that Atlanta had led the United States in one of the largest and most important undertakings in its history: the federal replacement of slums.

The first explosion came from Beavers' Slide. The uprights of a slum shack had been partly sawed in half, and any gentle breeze might have collasped it that sunny Saturday morning. So when Ickes thrust the plunger home to detonate the dynamite, moldy planks flew sky-high, and only a hole in the ground remained.

But at Techwood the shack selected to blow up hadn't had the same solicitous preparation. Ickes expected it to dis-

appear into oblivion, as had its predecessor. But when he pushed the plunger, there was a deafening roar and the shanty lurched but did not erupt. As the dust settled, Ickes turned to me with a quizzical grin.

"Guess I'm getting weak," he said.

The Secretary was in a rare mood that day, his sudden snarls and snaps momentarily harnessed. Even at the railroad station he had been lighthearted. When Straus inquired of a local reporter if the Atlanta jail, being remodeled with WPA money, was completed, Ickes wisecracked, "If not, maybe they have a good hotel where we can stay." Later when the Secretary was asked how far he would be from the buildings he was to blow up, he blurted out, "Far enough, I hope."

But Ickes was serious when he made his speech over a nation-wide hookup with *Atlanta Journal*'s radio station WSB.

"We have met here today to do something that has never before been done in this country. We are about to clear out two slum areas so that we may build on these sites something new and better: low-cost housing projects available to people in the lowest-income classes at rents that will be within their ability to pay. . . .

"As a people we ought to be as deeply ashamed of our slums as we were about our child labor. Personally we have all rejoiced that we have not had to live in slums. We have hoped that the revolving wheel of fortune would never mean that any of our children would be forced by circumstances to eke out an existence in any such neighborhood. We have known that they are a disgrace to our civilization.

"On the political side, the slums have been the source and mainstay of bad government. The wicked political rings that have flourished in so many of our large cities could not exist

without the slums. Perhaps this is one reason why so many cities and states have not only made no serious efforts to do away with them, but on the contrary have, by quiet and tacit support, assured their continued existence. The crooked politician has always known his way about the slums. . . .

"The cost of slums is high from every point of view: economic, political, social, and moral. They are so costly it is a matter of surprise that a supposedly prudent and business-like people should so long have endured these unsightly and objectionable warrens that we have permitted men, women, and children to call their homes. . . .

"We have had to overcome great difficulties in getting our slum-clearance program under way. From time to time the most astonishing rumors have come to us of the dismal fate that has befallen the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration. When we ventured to protest that we were alive, many of our critics declared that we ought to die, even if we hadn't already done so. . . . If the housing program is a corpse, you will admit that on this day, at any rate, it is quite a lively one."

A letter came from Secretary of Agriculture Wallace with a minor suggestion or two. No word came from Hopkins. Early in October I tried to get through to him by phone. No luck. The run-around continued, so I had to turn to others.

Lewis H. Brown, president of Johns-Manville Corporation, whose southern headquarters had been in one of our office buildings in Atlanta for years, and I had talked in New York upon my return from Europe. I had pointed out the help slum clearance could be to his building-materials business, as well as to the entire economy. Later I had sent him a copy of "The Way Out" and he wrote me his reaction.

"I have read over this memorandum several times. I am afraid that it will appeal greatly to Secretary Perkins, but that the presentation is such as will further 'frighten to death' all of those business elements whose co-operation must be secured to make such a program a success. You have been through this whole situation mentally and physically until you are thinking far ahead of the people to whom you have to *sell* this idea. My recommendation is that you, yourself, mentally try to visualize the state of mind of the people whom you are going to approach; then start in from that point and lead their minds gradually up to the point you hope to reach."

Brown was thoroughly sympathetic and arranged that Winfield Riefler, economic adviser to the National Emergency Council, lunch with me on November 5 in Washington and bring along one or two others. Brown also talked the whole matter over with Frank Walker, executive director of the National Emergency Council.

Riefler brought with him J. M. Daiger, adviser on housing to the Federal Reserve Board in Washington. They both had such a comprehensive understanding of our stalled economy that no argument was necessary to convince them slum clearance would answer the unemployment problem if undertaken heroically enough. After viewing the movies, it was agreed that they should be shown later in the week at a small dinner.

In the group that got together for the dinner in my rooms at the Mayflower were, besides Riefler and Daiger, Thomas G. Corcoran, counsel for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, who had helped draft the Securities Act of 1933, Benjamin V. Cohen, who did as much as Corcoran in perfecting this legislation, and Dwight L. Hoopingarner, associate director of Housing in the PWA, adviser to labor organiza-

tions, and executive head of the American Construction Council.

Among so many prima donnas, it wasn't easy to perfect a plan of action after the film was shown. All agreed that slum clearance was the answer. The smoke in the room got thicker and the thinking fuzzier.

Cohen and Corcoran huddled and whispered together but took little part in the discussion. I ventured the opinion that slum clearance was not entirely a government job and explained about the Amulree Committee in England. With Cohen and Corcoran keeping mum, the others agreed that a similar committee could be useful in the United States as a starter. Labor, real-estate, church, and welfare groups would be brought in; but the thought was to start quietly by first convincing the big bankers and industrialists. They would be the hardest to sell. And, too, if they were left unsold, their lack of understanding that slum clearance was enlightened capitalism, as the British had already proved, would prompt these men—who were the counterparts of the leading supporters of the program in England—to be its bitterest opponents in America.

It was decided that likable, capable Lewis Brown would be the ideal person to feel out some of the key men whose names had been discussed. And so the evening ended.

I had shrugged off what Brown had written about the need to go slow. But now the fact that people's minds had to be led up gradually to accept the program was beginning to sink in. The thought irritated me. There were outstanding progressives at that evening of films and talk at the Mayflower. But instead of getting all steamed up, as I was, it was obvious that they still had some more thinking to do. I was forced to admit that Brown had been right. It would be a long, hard pull.

So the business dragged on. Communication between all of us became further and further apart, more pressing day-to-day matters intervened, and I finally reached the unhappy conclusion that it would be necessary to make some other approach.

12 "NOBODY ELSE WILL OR CAN"—ROOSEVELT

TOWARD THE end of November, 1934, Ickes got into a heated wrangle with Moffett, who was handling the new Federal Housing Administration's program of insured loans for building. The dispute got so acrimonious that Roosevelt was asked to comment during a press conference on November 28, at Warm Springs.

The President was in a gay mood, having come to his Georgia home for his customary gala Thanksgiving with the polio patients at the Warm Springs Foundation. Atlanta was so close to the Little White House that I had driven down with the housing film and a projector on an outside chance that a showing could be fitted into the President's schedule.

I caught Presidential Secretary McIntyre in front of the cottage where he was staying. When I told him my purpose, he said that the film positively could not be worked in. Well, how about his taking a quick look himself? Everything was in my car, and he could see the movie in his cottage. Then he could give the President his own opinion and arrange a later showing if Roosevelt wanted to see the picture. No, "Mac" just didn't have the time, but maybe Henry Kanee could take a look.

Kanee was the stenographer who took most of the Presi-

dent's dictation. "Mac" located him near by, and soon he was viewing the slums of Europe in the bedroom of his cottage. The pictures over, Kanee said he would certainly report to the President what he had seen. There was no doubt in Kanee's mind but that Roosevelt was the one to carry the ball.

During that press conference, Roosevelt explained that Moffett's housing program was designed to serve those with incomes high enough to obtain private loans, while Ickes's program was for those whose incomes were so low that private capital could not take the risk of making them loans.

"You take the ordinary person," the President explained. "If he hasn't a job or any special capacity, private capital isn't going in and lend him money to build a house. Obviously not. Now what are we going to do? Are we going to leave him where he is just because he hasn't security to offer for a private loan?

"What is the result? They are living today under most terrible conditions in old tenement flats in New York on the East Side, on the West Side. We all know the conditions they live under. They are able to get, on the average, perhaps two rooms at five or six dollars a room. There is no sanitation, no light, nothing. They are pretty terrible living conditions.

"Now some say, 'We are licked. Private capital could not afford to build for five or six dollars a room. That is not enough.' That is their answer—'We are licked.' "

The press conference was taking place in the sunshine under the great, long-leaf pines near the Little White House. Much good-natured bantering was being batted back and forth. Between quips, a reporter posed a question of the President.

"On this housing program we were just talking about," he inquired, "has that been decided on at all?"

The President stared at the questioner, then shifted his

gaze to the tallest tip of the highest pine silhouetted against the brilliant hue of the Georgia sky. His chin was up, and for the moment, he held his cigarette holder as though it were a baton. Then he jammed it at a jaunty angle in his mouth and took a couple of quick puffs.

"If," he finally replied, "somebody asks the question, 'Is the government going to consider itself licked in its effort to take care of people who cannot otherwise be taken care of?' the answer is obviously 'No!' And further as a matter of policy the government is going to continue every reasonable effort to give the lowest-income group in the United States the chance to live under better conditions for the very simple reason that if government does not do it, *nobody else will or can*!"

The President went on to prove that only government could solve the problem by explaining what had happened in England and Austria.

I often wonder how much Kanee had been able to tell the President about the film before that press conference. It seemed more than a coincidence that Roosevelt had emphasized how slum clearance prevented Communism in Vienna and had kept down unrest in England, which were the main points of the movie.

The way the session with Kanee had been left was that I would hear from Washington in case the President wanted to see the film. But days became weeks without the hoped-for word. It looked as if this approach was going the way of the others. Still I was determined to go on, come what may.

The next film showing was in the auditorium of the Department of the Interior in Washington, on January 17, 1935, at the invitation of Secretary Ickes. About five hundred attended. Besides the Secretary, who presided, and Director of Housing Hackett, in the audience were Mrs. Ickes, Ambassa-

dor Bullitt, Agriculture Secretary Wallace, Labor Secretary Perkins, Angeloni of the Italian Embassy, Robert Kelley of our State Department, Livengood from Rome, Ernest Bohn, president of the National Association of Housing Officials, and various memers of the Senate and House. It was a group that could really do something, and I was heartened by their presence. Something might happen at last.

Mrs. Mary Simkhovitch, president, and Miss Helen Alfred, secretary of the National Public Housing Conference, were indefatigable workers for better housing. Mrs. Simkhovitch was vice-chairman of the New York Housing Authority and well knew conditions there. By February, 1935, she, Miss Alfred, and their associates had prepared a housing bill that they asked Congressman Robert Ramspeck, of Georgia, to introduce in the House of Representatives and Senator Robert Wagner, of New York, to introduce in the Senate.

When Congressman Ramspeck sought my advice before expressing his opinion to Miss Alfred, frankness forced me to make certain comments. I wrote him that "experience during the last fifteen months emphasizes the fallacy of waiting during this emergency for any local government to take the initiative, as was demonstrated in Atlanta by the manner in which all sorts of special interests imposed upon you to try to get you to defeat the slum-clearance program here. The history of this movement abroad proves conclusively the necessity for the initiative, motivating, and executing force to be retained in the central government free from the squabbles of local bodies. Our state is a good example, because the housing bill prepared by the Atlanta City Planning Commission, as well as the New York act, which was sent to our Governor, have both been turned down flat."

The ladies were doing their best, but sketchily, and it soon

developed that Senator Wagner also believed the bill should be rewritten. By the end of March, the Senator agreed to go along after certain changes, but the changes left the Housing Division in the Department of the Interior, and it was necessary to speak out once more against this arrangement. Ickes, it will be remembered, had ruled that all changes in orders involving more than five hundred dollars in the construction of housing projects must have his personal approval. This was such maladministration, causing such costly delays and showing such lack of confidence in his own men, that I wrote plainly stating my views.

The proponents of the bill were beginning to realize that they would not get far at that session of Congress, but decided to submit the legislation anyway. It never did get very far.

Talks, meetings, and the showing of the movie kept on at a brisk pace. Housing was catching on to such an extent that the subject was included in the Eighth Annual Institute of Citizenship at Emory University in Atlanta in February, 1935.

Next on the schedule was a luncheon meeting of the New York Building Congress on March 1. Additional sponsors were the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the Architectural League of New York, the New York Real Estate Board, and the National Public Housing Conference. Among the five hundred who attended were representatives of about all the groups I had listed in "The Way Out."

Before showing the film, I emphasized the requisite of an annual subsidy. Even the Washington sessions of the National Public Housing Conference had dodged the issue of limiting slum-clearance tenants to the poorest people. The subsidy idea seemed so new that the papers featured it, as I hoped they would.

"Proper housing for families of low income," said the *New York Times,* "cannot be supplied on a self-liquidating basis and government subsidy appears to be the inevitable and feasible means of rebuilding slums."

"It is impossible," wrote the *New York American,* "to put low rent housing on a self-liquidating basis, and the sooner we face it, the better it will be for all of us.... If we accept it as our duty to house the lower income groups of people, then we must face it as an actual fact that we are doing so in order to protect the balance of the population from the spread of disease, vice and epidemics, and we must take the people who are worthy of being housed and house them at the expense of the community, because the community more than saves it back."

"The day is fast approaching," the *World Telegram* editorialized, "when the State will compel cities to house their needy citizens properly, just as cities are now required to educate all children."

And the *Herald Tribune* said: "We must take the people whose standard of living must be raised and see what those people can afford to pay, and then fix a rent and furnish the balance by subsidy."

On the evening of March 14, some seven hundred assembled at the Harvard Club. Included in the program were Professor Oliver M. W. Sprague, former adviser to the Treasury Department, who had resigned some months before in a huff over Roosevelt's policies; B. Charney Vladeck, member of the New York Housing Authority; and I, with the film now titled *The World War against Slums.*

During cocktails and private dinner in the Biddle Room, disgruntled Sprague and unassuming Vladeck had little to say. Most of the talking was done by irrepressible Joseph P.

Day, who was, in every way, all you would expect from a six-feet-three-inch character who was the world's greatest auctioneer of real estate. Joe put on a great show, good-naturedly aimed at me, his fellow real-estate broker. "Subsidy? Nonsense. People want to live in slums. They don't know how to act in decent housing. Where would they get their firewood if they couldn't burn up the stair banisters. Fix 'em and they'd burn 'em up again. I know. I've seen 'em do it." Then Joe's eyes would twinkle. As there would be a question period after my talk, it looked as though Joe was warming up in readiness to take off the gloves later.

Great, medieval, vaulted Harvard Hall was jammed. We spoke from beneath the mammoth elephant-head trophy that Harvard's distinguished alumnus, Teddy Roosevelt, had presented. Sprague led off. As the *Herald Tribune* reported it the next day, "The meeting at the Club was arranged to discuss means of clearing slums and launching housing projects, and Dr. Sprague began his remarks with a consideration of this problem. But he began thereafter to roam the economic and financial world. . . ." And roam it he did, damning everybody and everything.

When Vladeck's turn finally came, he quietly and effectively stuck to the subject, pointing out that New York City could trim its budget sixty million a year through public housing. In proof, he quoted figures showing that the cost of educating, policing, and crime prevention in the slum areas was the highest of any in the city and, moreover, that the city got less revenue from the slum sections.

When I started to show the film, it was after ten o'clock. The patient audience had been talked at so long that I was tempted to twist the old wheeze that you can always tell a Harvard man but you can't tell him much, into some wise-

crack about telling Harvard men too much, but luckily caught myself in time and got down to the business at hand.

A surprising number stayed for the question session, and Joe Day's posers were fair, kind, and constructive, much to my relief. As we said good night, he confessed full sympathy with the program and admitted that he had merely been doing a little friendly leg-pulling during dinner.

Upon my return to Atlanta, early in April, I ran smack into an occurrence that showed all too plainly that the opposition would stop at nothing to undermine the housing program.

Because Atlanta had led the way in slum clearance, it was natural for other cities to seek guidance from our experience. Accordingly, Cason Callaway, of the Callaway Textile Mills in LaGrange, Georgia, and I had talked about clearing some of the Negro slums in that city. A. R. Clas, who had superseded Colonel Hackett as director of Housing, was approached and agreed to look into the matter on the ground himself. He arrived in Atlanta late in the afternoon of April 3, so I arranged a little dinner for him at the Capital City Club. We would drive down to LaGrange the next day.

The following morning the doorman of the club, who had been there for years, telephoned me to say that a man, representing himself to be "from the United States Secret Service," had sought from him the name of the waiter who had served the dinner in honor of Mr. Clas in the private dining room. The name was given, and the waiter was interviewed in his home. He was questioned about the talk at the table. Were more housing projects to be built? If so, where? How many were at the dinner, and who were they?

I was so mad at this unwarranted interference that I had

a careful investigation made. It developed that the man "from the United States Secret Service" was none other than the paid secretary of the local Apartment House Owners Association. It had proclaimed that it would fight us "to the last ditch," and it was in its natural element. Since I suspected who had sent the "Secret Service man," I went to his slum brokerage office and told him in explicit particulars what I thought of him. He made no denial.

The next group to tackle on my agenda was my own trade association, the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, of which I was president in 1931. Its twenty-eighth annual convention was to be in Cincinnati. The days would be devoted to the problems of office-building operation, but the effect of traffic and slums on central real-estate values would also be discussed. With properties represented in our association employing more capital than the total investment in the steel, telephone, and automobile industries combined, I felt that my friends should be among the most militant leaders for slum clearance. Not just because to clear slums would enhance the value of their holdings, but because it would benefit humanity, too. Slum clearance, therefore, should appeal to them for they were upright and humane citizens, as well as good businessmen.

On the afternoon of June 12, 1935, in the grand ballroom of the Netherlands Plaza Hotel, *The World War against Slums* was shown to some five hundred members gathered from all over the country. Before starting the film I thought it wise to break the ice that was forming around the circle of my more conservative acquaintances.

"When we think of slum clearance as foreign to our capitalistic society," I began, "I feel that in advocating it I should quote a little verse:

" 'Just see that happy moron,
He doesn't give a damn;
I wish I were a moron;
My God, perhaps I am!'

"But, with you, I have always been interested in the preservation of capital. To protect the proper use of capital is one reason for this talk and these movies, as you'll see. So please don't call me a moron too soon.

"There has probably never been a time in our history, with the exception of 1780 to 1795, when our citizenry has been as alive to the issues of the day as it is now. Since 1932 there have been more subjects of national importance intelligently discussed by our people than at any time since that fifteen-year period when we were coming out of our Revolution. Then our nation was headed by the 'Father of Our Country.' He was a much more radical man than Franklin Delano Roosevelt, for Washington was the leader of a revolution.

"So let us approach slum clearance with the same open-mindedness that our forebears gave to the problems of their day when they were building up our country. It is entirely appropriate that we examine such important movements as public housing and consider them in an unprejudiced manner."

After developing many of the specific reasons for slum clearance, I wound up my introduction to the movie.

That meeting ended in a huddle with much talk as several clustered around for more debate. Most of them, I found, were willing to be convinced. But there was little doubt in my mind that it would take time and lots of it really to bring about "The Way Out." In later years it was gratifying to note, however, that many leaders from our association became

members of their local Housing Authorities, and quite a few assumed the chairmanship.

But "laying my cards on the line," as I had done, bewildered many businessmen. It wasn't long before this parody reached me from a mischievous well-wisher.

"Just see that happy moron,
He doesn't give a damn;
I wish I were a moron
Housed by a government man."

The talk, talk, talk of these sincere and earnest men recalled Tom Paine's comment about the Continental Congress: "Words pile up, and afterwards men do things. First the words."

Being a realist, I wanted more than words from the meetings. It was understandable that a session such as the one at the Harvard Club in New York could not appropriately commit a social group of that kind to a resolution in support of any movement, let alone one as controversial as slum clearance. But things were different with the National Association of Building Owners and Managers. Its object was legitimately to further its own ends. Slum clearance should certainly qualify. A resolution of support from such an influential group, one of the oldest and most highly respected in the United States, would help in Washington and throughout the country. So I went to work with a will.

Policy was determined by the Board of Governors, composed of representatives from local associations in forty-four cities widely scattered in twenty-eight states. The board met on the last day of the convention. A resolution that Sam Buckingham, of Cleveland, had helped prepare was intro-

duced by Carl Palmer, Cleveland's board member, whose comprehensive understanding of the movement made us slum-clearance kin though not blood brothers. After extended debate, the resolution was referred to the Executive Committee of our Apartment House Division for action, and then for transmittal to all members of the Board of Governors for a vote by mail within thirty days.

That it would have tough sledding was forecast in a letter from Robert Saunders, of St. Louis, chairman of the Apartment House Division, who commented: "Everyone with whom I talked feels that the association should keep hands off; that the political aspects make it an undesirable matter for the association."

So I was pleasantly surprised to learn that on August 5 favorable action had been taken by the Executive Committee of the Apartment Housing Division. As a result, the following resolution was transmitted to the Board of Governors of the entire association.

Whereas, More than ten billions ($10,000,000,000) of dollars have been invested in office buildings and apartment houses owned or controlled by members of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, and

Whereas, The United States Government is now building housing projects in various cities of the country and is committed to the purpose of building more, and

Whereas, In the opinion of the Board of Governors of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers, government housing, when limited solely to those citizens of the poorest class who cannot pay an economic rent, is socially and economically desirable, and

Whereas, Slum clearance and low rent housing perform a public benefit by lessening the number and extent of public services which must be provided those least fortunate

and by decreasing the epidemic of disease and vice which obtain in and radiate from slum areas, and

Whereas, It is axiomatic that private capital cannot produce and maintain proper housing without an economic return,

THEREFORE RESOLVED, that the National Association of Building Owners and Managers approves the principle of government support of housing projects to the extent that they meet a need which private capital cannot supply; and urges that capital and labor join in such subsidy, capital through taxation, and labor, when employed on such projects, through lower hourly wage rates, but higher yearly incomes made possible through annual instead of seasonal employment, and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the President of the National Association of Building Owners and Managers transmit to the President of the United States a copy of these resolutions and make them available to the press.

By the middle of August, reactions began to arrive. For the most part, those who approved merely voted "Aye" without further comment, while those who opposed wrote at length.

On September 10, President Turley wrote me, "As the matter now stands, there have been twenty-eight associations voted, sixteen favorably and twelve against, eighteen yet to be heard from. On the weighted vote [votes per association were based on the total assessed value of all member properties] it now stands 306 against and 250 for. Chicago [78 votes] has not voted although I am told that if forced to, they would cast a ballot against the resolution."

Since the weighted vote was what counted and as caucuses had disclosed that some other large associations, besides Chicago, would vote against, it was finally decided to withdraw the resolution. We proponents had to be satisfied with

the constructive discussion that the resolution had provoked. It showed that understanding and sympathetic support was slowly gaining.

Slum clearance in America was still an infant project. It had to crawl before it learned to walk. As for me, I wanted to yank it out of its play pen.

13 "ILLEGAL, ILLOGICAL, CRAZY AS HELL!"

SENATOR WAGNER, who had placed his name on the housing bill then under discussion, was planning to visit Europe in midsummer of 1935, so Matt Daiger followed up his earlier inquiry about a meeting with the Senator. This came about when a few leaders joined me for dinner and to see the films at the Mayflower in Washington, early in July.

It was felt that a central group should be working. At least $25,000 was needed to establish and maintain a clearing-house that would harmonize conflicting views and perfect recommendations. Senator Wagner volunteered to try to get the money through the President from his emergency fund. He also felt it probable that a White House meeting might be called by the President much along the lines originally suggested to Hopkins.

The evening ended in good spirits and with high hopes. Senator Wagner left Washington shortly thereafter for Europe. Whether he ever discussed it with the President, Daiger and I never found out. So I chalked up another win by default for the opposition.

While in Washington, Clark Howell and I were to get together on July 17 to check up on housing. "Mr. Clark" was in the nation's capital trying to pull some of Gene Talmadge's

political chestnuts out of the fire. "Ole Gene" Talmadge was the tobacco-chewing, swaggering governor of Georgia, and self-styled "leader of the pee-pul," whose leadership was often tinged with self-interest. It was he who had stymied the introduction of a housing bill in the Georgia legislature at its past session. "Ole Gene" had a simple rule from which he never deviated: he was "agin" anything and everything that Roosevelt wanted.

The Governor's opposition was active. He had declined to submit his federal-fund road projects to the Works Progress Administrator in Georgia. As a result, the flow of money from Uncle Sam's voluminous pockets was stopped. And it was in the hope of starting the flow again that Howell had arranged for Talmadge to see the President. Despite the fact that Talmadge was as anti-Roosevelt as Huey Long, the Chief Executive had received him cordially. The President assured Clark Howell and the Governor that $19,000,000 was "on the hook" just waiting for Georgia to straighten out its affairs. They were told to go to the Bureau of Public Roads and see its chief, T. H MacDonald. From his subsequent meeting that afternoon with MacDonald, Talmadge got little encouragement. So when Howell brought him to my apartment just before dinner, "Ole Gene" was ready to blow his top. A mint julep pacified him momentarily, and we sauntered over to the roof of the Army and Navy Club to escape the heat and get something to eat.

While waiting for dinner to be served, the Governor sipped a second julep and began muttering about the President and MacDonald.

"Their reasoning is illegal!" he suddenly blurted out. "It's illegal, illogical, and crazy as hell!"

The Governor apparently could not—or would not—accept the stipulations other states were meeting to obtain federal

road funds. His colorful phraseology kept coming back to me as he rambled on. But it seemed to me that "illegal, illogical, crazy as hell!" particularly applied to the Governor himself, rather than to the President and the Chief of the Bureau of Public Roads.

Mellowing with the meal, Talmadge asked me about slum clearance in Atlanta.

"Now that you've got Techwood goin', Palmer," he observed, "and made a little money out of it, I s'pose you'll get into somethin' else."

"Not necessarily, Governor," I replied. "You see, slum clearance has a lot more to it than just the business angle. Clear slums, and you help people."

"Well, you're wrong there," he retorted. "Slums don't hurt nobody. In fact, slums are good for people. Makes 'em stronger. You gotta be strong to survive 'em. Take Jack Johnson. He came from the slums. He's their product."

I had met this kind of illogical reasoning before: drawing a general conclusion from a single example. So when Talmadge mentioned my recent trip to Europe, I took another tack.

"A great many years ago," I explained, "the British passed compulsory housing laws not unlike our pure-food laws. They made it as illegal to rent an insanitary house as it is illegal to sell impure meat in the United States. You believe in the pure-food laws of our country, don't you, Governor?"

The question seemed to stump "Ole Gene," but not for long. He pushed back his rumpled white linen coat, tilted his chair, put a thumb under each red gallus, snapped them, and plumped back to the floor again.

"Naw!" he denied with vigor. "If we didn't have the pure-food laws, folks would be more careful what they et!"

Ridiculous, of course. And probably the Governor meant

much less than he said. He was a great one for verbal gymnastics and liked to think that he could maintain any position, no matter how untenable. His stand on slum clearance and the pure-food laws was certainly "illegal, illogical, and crazy as hell!"

As the summer wore on and the construction of Techwood progressed, new problems developed. Some of the positions taken were literally "crazy as hell." I couldn't by the wildest stretch of the imagination believe that they could happen—but they did.

The City Attorney of Atlanta ruled that land owned by "the United States of America . . . is no longer within the State or City for any purpose except the service of criminal process. Under this advice, I think the people who reside on this reservation [Techwood or University Homes] would not be subject to City regulations, including police and fire, health, etc., or City taxation, or otherwise." Interpreting that dictum literally, the two projects could burn to the ground, and the City of Atlanta wouldn't lift a hand to put out the conflagration.

Fortunately, the Attorney General of the United States came to our rescue by ruling that civil jurisdiction remained with the City and State, and that tenants retained their franchise privileges and were entitled to fire and police protection as well as use of the schools.

Applications for occupancy were pouring in, and the Techwood Advisory Committee was pressing Washington for a statement of policy. By September 11, conditions were so demoralized that Clark Howell, on behalf of the committee, sent an official letter to Secretary Ickes, listing Housing Division inaction in detail.

Receiving no acknowledgment to his letter, Howell tele-

graphed Ickes on the twenty-fourth: "ADVISORY BOARD TO MEET THIS WEEK AND PREPARE TO TENDER ITS RESIGNATION UNLESS SOMETHING IS DONE TO RELIEVE SITUATION. . . . FEEL WE CAN NO LONGER ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR FAILURE TO GET ACTION IN WASHINGTON."

This wire got the ball rolling at last. Howell and the Advisory Committee asked me to handle the matter with Ickes. But nearly a month went by before we could get together. Meanwhile, it became increasingly evident that legislation was needed to straighten out the conflict between national and local jurisdictions, so we called in Senator George, of Georgia, to help. By the time of our conference, Ickes was able to show some progress along legislative and other lines. So the Advisory Committee decided that, having once become members of the crew, it would stick with the ship, no matter how rough the seas, or how inefficient the navigator in the person of the Secretary of the Interior.

President Roosevelt dedicated Techwood on November 29, 1935. Since the occasion was in the nature of a home-coming celebration—the President called Georgia his "second home" —the stands of Georgia Tech Stadium, across the street from Techwood, were jammed by tens of thousands of loyal supporters.

Colonel E. W. Starling, Chief of the White House Secret Service, swung off the President's car, a hand on his gun in the pocket of his overcoat, as the official party stopped for a view of Techwood before entering the stadium. With the President were Mrs. Roosevelt, Senator George, and Senator Russell. Just as my movie camera started clicking at close quarters, the President viewed his first slum-clearance project. His face was grave for an instant, then broke into one of the happiest smiles I ever saw on his forceful, happy face. Mrs. Roosevelt, bundled in furs with a large orchid showing, was

beside him. He turned quickly, reached out his hand for hers, and they grinned with delight.

"Isn't it grand!" the President declared. "They're really getting on with the job. I just love it!"

Then he pushed the button that unveiled the bronze dedicatory plaque on the wall of the nearest apartment.

The President's reception glowed with warmth and affection for a leader whose humanitarian principles and policies were accepted by the throng as marking him one of the truly great figures in world history. He took the speaker's platform on the arm of his son, James. His address was about national and world affairs, as well as housing.

"Within sight of us today," he said of Techwood, "stands a tribute to useful work under government supervision—the first slum-clearance and low-rent housing project. Here, at the request of the citizens of Atlanta, we have cleaned out nine square blocks of antiquated, squalid dwellings, for years a detriment to the community. Today those hopeless old houses are gone, and in their places we see the bright, cheerful buildings of the Techwood Housing Project. Within a very short time, people who never before could get a decent roof over their heads will live here in reasonable comfort amid healthful, worth-while surroundings; others will find similar homes in Atlanta's second slum clearance, the University Homes Project, and still others will find similar opportunity in nearly all of the older, overcrowded cities of the United States."

Now that direct action had started on the slums of Atlanta, the studies of what had been done to the slums of other countries took on added significance. These, although covering much ground, had not touched the Orient. So I was particularly happy to be invited to meet and talk with Toyohiko

Kagawa, who was interested in the slum problems of his country, when he came to Atlanta in December, 1935.

Kagawa had been detained by the immigration authorities at San Francisco because of regulations against persons with trachoma entering the United States. I learned that his case of this dreaded eye disease had been contracted while sharing his bed with a beggar. When we met, Kagawa peered through thick lenses set in black, horn-rimmed frames, apparently having great difficulty in seeing at all. His thick black hair began far back on a pear-shaped head balanced by two large ears with prominent lobes. His wide mouth, under a broad nose, broke into a friendly smile.

Kagawa spoke English, having studied at Princeton, and looked older than his forty-seven years. Already suffering from tuberculosis, he had not expected to live long when he started his slum studies at the age of twenty-one. Though disease had taken its toll, when talking about his experiences he acted very much alive.

Kagawa told me that he felt so strongly about the slum problem that he had lived for years in the worst area of the notorious Shinkawa District in Kobe. He had chosen that vile neighborhood despite his samurai family background and a father who had held a secretaryship to the Privy Council in Japan. Kagawa had embraced Christianity, which was a strong factor in leading him to devote his life to those whom he felt needed him.

"First I found a house that you might say was at the bottom of the well of humanity," he explained. "The only reason I was able to get it was because my neighbors thought it haunted by the victim who had recently been murdered there.

"Have you been in Japan? No? Well, I'll describe for you a little of what my slum hut was like. It was about six feet

square, without windows, and the walls were so flimsy that, at a time when I was caring for ten people who were down and out, I simply knocked out a wall to make a little more room for them. The shack was like all others in Shinkawa, where ten thousand people live in these six-by-sixes. Sometimes two families, comprising eight or nine people, live in a single hut. Over a hundred use the same toilet. You have seen the slums of Europe and America. But ours in Japan are worse because the buildings are so small and fragile. We even use paper doors, and in winter it is often very cold.

"The scavengers, jinrikisha men, pimps, gamblers, and prostitutes who were my neighbors spent much time in idleness. Most of the children had some disease of the skin. The infant mortality rate exceeded five hundred per thousand. I reached the conclusion that the slum problem in Japan was so vast that the only attack with any promise of success must be through liberating the laborers. If they could be freed from their semislavery, if they could earn more, then eventually the slum conditions would be a little less bad because the inhabitants would have a bit more to spend.

"Since these unfortunates had no leader, I assumed that role. First I wrote a book of my slum experience called *Across the Death Line*. I wrote articles on the subject for the newspapers. And I became a militant agitator at public meetings. The slums in Japan, and all over the world, must be wiped out!"

A study of Kagawa's works disclosed that he wrote for the world. His graphic poem "Shinkawa" might well have been "Naples" or even "Washington," as far as the people of the slums or the smells and the squalor were concerned.

From thoughts far afield on the slums of the Orient, I was snapped back home to the continuing problems of Tech-

wood. On January 27, 1936, Comptroller General of the United States J. R. McCarl, who had already thrown more than his share of monkey wrenches into slum-clearance machinery, ruled that rents on Techwood, the sorely wounded guinea pig, must be high enough to pay back to the government the entire cost of land and buildings, plus all operating expenses. He added that, because Techwood was United States property, no part of the rentals could be diverted to reimburse the City of Atlanta, in lieu of taxes, for fire and police protection, or for school, sewerage, sanitary, and street-maintenance facilities. This nullified tentative agreements between the Department of the Interior and the City of Atlanta for Techwood to pay a service charge in place of taxes. It also made mandatory such high rents that those for whom the project was intended could not afford to live there.

Now it became necessary to find some solution for this new problem, so a corrective bill was prepared that Senator George introduced into the Senate. It was passed on March 27, 1936. Congressman Ramspeck handled the legislation in the House, and by May, President Roosevelt had signed a law that put Techwood and similar developments back on the track originally intended.

Clark Howell, meanwhile, had returned from the Pacific, where he had attended the inauguration of the new Commonwealth of the Philippines. And he was displeased, to say the least, with the situation in which he found Techwood. We all felt that most of the trouble came from the ineptness of Ickes and his staff. So Howell took pen in hand and stated our case in no uncertain terms. We were all properly incensed by the cavalier treatment we had been receiving from Washington. Our advice had been repeatedly sought and as repeatedly ignored.

Back to Washington I went, armed with Howell's letter.

By now I knew every pole along the railroad and every town from the sky. I presented the letter to the proper authorities, and the gears began to grind again.

My hope that we would get action was finally justified. Decisions began to come through. Howell continued to help as only he was in a position to do.

While all these trapeze acts were going on in the three-ring housing circus, there were some enthusiasts pushing for comprehensive legislation to revamp the entire setup. I did not share their optimism that the bill they had persuaded Senator Wagner to sponsor was adequate, or that proper backing for it could be arranged. I had been through too many battles, and though I didn't wear wound stripes, I carried the scars.

We were witnessing nationally that which we had already seen locally: those against slum-clearance housing were shouting from the housetops, while those for the program were standing mute, especially the ones whose influence could do the most good.

The answer still seemed to be through some such approach as "The Way Out." But that kind of broad attack was not being used in the hearings before the Senate committee on the Wagner bill. It was mostly single-shot ammunition. Testimony was taken for days during April, but the "Housing Act of 1936" never got very far. At best it proved to the supporters of public housing that better groundwork should be laid in advance the next time.

During this backing and filling in America, high-ranking British kept crying out against slums on every possible occasion. Even the launching of the *Queen Mary* afforded an opportunity to speak on the subject.

"Edward VIII, new King of England," Arthur Brisbane reported on March 17, 1936, "visited the magnificently luxurious ocean steamer, *Queen Mary,* in Glasgow; then went

from house to house knocking on doors, visiting some of the worst slum dwellings in all of his Kingdom. Later, talking to Lord Melchett, the King put the problem of England, this country, and the whole world, in these few words: 'How do you reconcile a world that has produced this mighty ship with the slums we have just visited?' " So spoke John Bull.

14 LADY ASTOR AND LADIES IN LIMEHOUSE

BY THE SPRING of 1936, Laura and I had become increasingly impatient to return to England. Two years before, when we'd made that quick swing around Europe, we promised ourselves to be back soon for a more extended study of what the British had done about slum clearance. We had seen enough the previous trip to know that they could teach us much in America. We wanted to have a look at the Midlands and Scotland, too.

Before deciding on any extended travel, Laura, as always, first made sure that the plans for the children were properly arranged. This year they would be off to summer camp, as usual. Margaret was a young lady now, nearly seventeen, and would go away to college in the fall. Our younger daughters, Laura and Jeannette, would remain in school in Atlanta.

Watching the three grow into womanhood, we realized that our tightly knit family would soon be breaking up. The girls had been publishing *The Brookwood Bugle* regularly for four years. It had reached a circulation of two hundred copies in twenty states and four foreign countries. But with Margaret going away to college, the children decided to print a gala final edition, and *The Bugle* ended on a triumphant note.

So Laura and I began packing our bags, meanwhile arranging for passage on the maiden voyage of the *Queen Mary* from New York to Southhampton in June. Since we planned to visit the major cities of Great Britain, I carefully stowed my photographic equipment in the luggage, and we also took along a faithful Ford coupé.

As the newest vessel of the Cunard Line came into the harbor at Southampton on June 10, speedboats and planes rushed out to meet her. Excursion steamers, jammed with cheering Britishers, formed an escort to the dock, where thousands more waved handkerchiefs and hats and roared a warm welcome.

The Atlantic crossing had been calm and peaceful, and Laura and I were well rested. So after a hearty breakfast early the next morning, we were off to visit the slums of Southampton. A car and driver were put at our disposal by Mr. Meggeson, the town clerk, for which I was thankful as I was hesitant about tackling the British left-handed traffic regulations with our Ford. Dr. Payne, from the local Department of Health, acted as our guide.

Southampton's first Council Housing, we were told, was built in 1911, when sixty-nine two- to five-story flats were built within the old town wall. As a large proportion of their local workmen, naturally enough, were dock laborers, with intermittent duties at small pay, it was imperative to keep rents at the lowest possible level. So most of the houses contained, as the British called them, "nonparlour" flats, with three bedrooms, which they were able to rent at just under two dollars a week.

We spent most of the day visiting the slums and the areas to which the inhabitants were being moved. While Laura plied Dr. Payne with questions, I kept my camera clicking. The new developments were attractive and well tended.

"Corporation trams" provided the necessary transportation for the workers to the docks where they were employed. This minor detail might easily have been overlooked, but we discovered that it was much more important than it seemed. Some housing projects on the edge of town, in fact, were having difficulty in getting tenants, as the weekly tram fare to and from the docks totaled over a dollar, which was more than half their rent. I was reminded for the thousandth time that in planning housing projects it is sometimes fatal to overlook the slightest detail.

Several of the projects had been built by the Council with direct labor, instead of letting it out to private contractors. This method, we were told, had saved them some money. The developments we saw ranged in size from Houndwell, with but 26 dwellings, to the Burgess Road Housing Scheme, where 1,164 units had been built on 102 acres. In the center was a 15-acre park through which a brook lazily meandered.

Most of what we saw conformed to the orthodox with one exception. This was a development for dockers near the wharves. Only a limited site was available, and the Council wanted to put it to the most extensive use as, to save that relatively substantial bus fare, the low-income dock laborers had to be housed within walking distance of their work. The Council also wished to avoid the usual flats, first, because of the large number of children per family, and also because of the difficulty and cost in maintaining public halls and stairs. That was another salient point to keep in mind: before the architects go to work on their planning boards, be sure to check whether the number of persons per family in the slum area is higher than the national average. Chances are that it is.

The architects working on this development near the docks finally evolved a design of two-story "nonparlour" houses,

superimposed one upon the other. This created a four-story building in which each unit had the privacy and amenities of the normal two-story home. The first floor of each dwelling consisted of a large living room, a "scullery," or kitchen, with bath and "W.C.," or water closet, adjoining the latter. On the second floor there were three ample bedrooms.

A long, open balcony extended across the rear at what would have been the roof line of the ground-floor houses. This balcony gave access to the first floors of the upper houses and was reached by stairs at either end. Every house thus became a self-contained unit, with its own interior stairs and with no public space for the Council to maintain. Laura and I thought it most ingenious.

"It's practical and delightful at the same time," she summed it up. "Instead of the forced intimacy of apartments, these tenants have the privacy of their own homes."

"And," I added, as Dr. Payne smilingly nodded, "by putting one set of houses atop another, they have doubled the number of dwelling units on the limited acreage."

The residents we spoke to were unanimously enthusiastic and said they much preferred their private dwellings to the regulation flats. And they were happy, of course, that the proximity of their homes to the docks made it unnecessary for them to spend five or six precious shillings a week for transportation. Item to remember: be certain that the tenants of low-rent developments can get to and from work easily and inexpensively.

When discussing management, I sensed political patronage in selecting rent collectors. The whole system, as laid down in their printed instructions, was too inflexible for use with former slum dwellers. There was no genuine, human contact, no effort to teach cleanliness or better diet. The use of women under the Octavia Hill System would probably be

better. That had already been proved to us by Miss Alice Samuels of Liverpool.

The next morning we piled bag and baggage into the Ford coupé, and I got behind the wheel, wishing I had a sextant and compass to guide me in driving on the "wrong" side of the road. Fortunately, it would be some time before we hit the heavy traffic around London, and Laura spelled me at the wheel to orient herself at "left-handed driving," too.

Determined not to miss anything of interest this trip, we stopped at the smaller towns along the highway. At Portsmouth we found that about 10 per cent of the population lived in public housing. At Chichester there was a strong demand for five-bedroom houses to alleviate overcrowding in large families. The poor, I reflected, seem to find comfort in numerous offspring. At Brighton we were steered to Dr. Forbes, the Medical Officer of Health, a robust, genial gentleman who bubbled over with enthusiasm when we mentioned that our primary interest was slum clearance.

"Well, well!" he exclaimed. "So you in the States are starting slum clearance, too. Excellent! Excellent! We here in Brighton have been at it long enough to place about ten per cent of our people in Council Houses, something like three thousand dwellings. But there's much to be done before all the slums are wiped out."

I had learned long ago that it's not always easy to dig out the salient facts. But here was somebody who, at first glance, I was sure, would come out with the unvarnished truth. I asked him if they'd had any particular problems.

"Too many," he admitted. "The folks who handle the money often try to save in the wrong places. D' you know what those stupid officials did to cut the cost of a house less than five pounds? They insisted upon lowering the height of the windows by one foot! This insane idea not only curtailed

the sunlight in the houses but left a thirty-inch pocket below each ceiling where overheated and stagnant air was bound to accumulate. That's bad for health! And, mind you, the savings effected on the loan charges amounts to less than a penny per house per week! Did you ever hear of anything more foolish and miserly?"

Dr. Forbes paused for breath, but he wasn't done yet, not by a long shot.

"These financial officials," he went on vehemently, "carry on in that way despite the added revenue we supply locally from a scheme of our own to lower rents. No other place has a similar plan, and you may care to hear about it."

"Please go on," Laura urged him.

"It's the cinema tax," Dr. Forbes explained. "The picture shows pay a certain amount to the city for permission to remain open on Sunday. It runs up to about a thousand pounds a year. Half goes to the hospitals and half to lower the rent for aged people in their specialized houses. Normally they would pay about eight shillings a week, but the cinema tax lowers it to as little as a shilling, according to need."

"From two dollars to only a quarter a week," Laura said in surprise. "Why, that's wonderful!"

"There is one factor of primary importance," Dr. Forbes went on, "that I am sure you good people in the States will want to keep in mind. That is location. Houses too far from work just don't rent."

Laura and I exchanged understanding glances. "The folks in Southampton found that out," she said, "to their sorrow."

"Yes, I know," Dr. Forbes nodded. "The country cottage, of course, has its points. It's private and quiet. But the vast majority of people want to live as close as possible to the center of the city. And for very good reasons. First, they can walk to work. And besides, a surprising number of them take

their midday meals at home. This gives 'em hot food, which is desirable for good health, and it's less costly than buying a meal near the job. Of course, we could build our housing developments farther out of town if cheap transportation were provided. At present that difficulty is partly solved with concessions by the tramways and bus services to those traveling before eight in the morning. Personally, I would strongly suggest the extension of cheap fares, by subsidy if need be."

Dr. Forbes reminded me of our rural family doctors back home. His interest in the health of all who lived in Brighton was more like that of a fatherly adviser rather than that of an impersonal Medical Officer of Health. It was significant that he found housing to be of vital influence on community health. Here was a man who spoke not from idle theory but from the hard facts of long experience. We thanked him sincerely as we said good-by.

We unfortunately missed the town clerks at Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells since we passed through on Saturday afternoon and their offices were closed for the weekend. But while we didn't see the interiors of their Council Houses, the age of the surrounding buildings was, by contrast, all too evident. To find the residents of these ancient and honorable cities alert to the needs of modern housing, and really doing something about it, made us feel ashamed at the late start our own country was making.

The drive into London on Sunday, June 13, was free enough of the terrific weekday traffic so that we reached the Carlton Hotel in the center of things without physical injury. But the mental anguish of "left-handed traffic" had me in a sweat. I'd never have made it without mishap if Laura hadn't acted as navigator. Our Ford had, of course, the steering wheel on the left in American style, and I couldn't see

whether it was safe to pass another vehicle. When a car approached, I instinctively started to turn to the right until Laura put a warning hand on my arm. And whenever an immense double-deck bus raced straight at us with a fiendish roar, I jammed down on the brake pedal and waited tensely until it had rushed past us. It was an immense relief to get into the restful Sunday quiet of our hotel.

The London newspapers were filled with encouraging reports of the progress made in slum clearance since our previous visit in 1934. The five-year plan for the United Kingdom was proceeding on schedule. A half-million slum dwellers, it was said, had already been moved to new, clean homes. Others were being transferred to new houses at the rate of some 26,000 a month. The British, we felt as we went through the papers, had every right to crow over their accomplishments in clearing the slums.

Lewis Silkin, chairman of the Housing and Public Health Committee of the London County Council, was apparently making the headway he had hoped for when I conferred with him two years before. The Council's slum-clearance activities had extended to twenty of the twenty-eight metropolitan boroughs, with eighty developments in progress throughout the London area.

All this, Silkin had publicly announced, was but the beginning of a new day in slum clearance. The past had seen much done in the London area; but it had been piecemeal, for the most part. Now he was eager to have the Council use the powers and subsidies available from the Central Government to make a strong attack on the deplorable conditions in the notorious East End.

It was the same story—though on a much larger scale—that we had met in Southampton. The dockers, Silkin in-

sisted, must be provided with homes close to their work. According to a survey just completed, in the Limehouse area of the East India Docks and the Isle of Dogs more than 60,000 people were living in slums with another 103,000 in overcrowded dwellings.

The East-Ender, Silkin pointed out, was a great person, and the district in which he lived had a character all its own. It was far too fine to destroy, and he would not wish to break it up or cause it to lose its identity. The East-Ender, he affirmed, well deserved decent housing conditions, and the Council would do its utmost to provide them. He was confident that the public would be prepared to accept any proposal, no matter how drastic, for the removal of the terrible cancer of the slums. There would be "considerable financial recoupment, but the benefit in terms of health and happiness would be incalculable."

If the Council eventually adopted a plan such as he had outlined—which would be the largest program for redevelopment ever undertaken by local authority—the slums of London, Silkin said, could be cleared within six years, "if the present administration continued."

That "if" made me wonder how much of Silkin's brave statement was actual intent and how much was politics. He was a true humanitarian and sincerely wanted to clear the East End. But he was a realist as well and, back in 1934, had helped Sir Arthur Henderson to unseat those controlling the L. C. C. by claiming "not enough done," and using the potent slogan, "Up with the houses, down with the slums."

No one knew better than Silkin the colossal problems presented by the Stepney and Poplar districts, loosely known as the East End, Whitechapel, or Limehouse section of London. In it were Shoreditch, Bethnal Green, and the district where

Bill Sikes, Dickens's notorious character in *Oliver Twist,* had carried on his nefarious schemes.

This area had been populated for over two thousand years. With the coming of William the Conqueror, Stepney was built on London's border. In the time of Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, it was a seaman's haven and furnished many ships to fight the Spanish Armada. The workmen came from the Limehouse district, so named for its lime kilns. Small businesses also settled in the East End to escape regulation by the city's guilds. Over the centuries, this section of London became populated by a motley crew of cutthroats and harridans and other rogues.

It wasn't until 1806 that a water system was built, and it provided service arbitrarily for but a few businesses and homes. Most people still used open wells that bred disease. A half century later, in 1852, the East London Water Company was required to supply water for all if petitions in writing from 80 per cent of the residents were received. Since the vast majority of the population was hopelessly illiterate, this law was unenforceable. As late as 1870, in one East End court some two hundred and fifty people shared a single tap, which was open for but twenty-five minutes a day and was closed entirely on Sundays.

Over a century ago it had been said: "The people never die here; they are murdered by the fever. The state of backyards and the streets were enough to nourish and breed a pestilence." The seventeenth-century laws to prevent slums in London had, instead of accomplishing their worthy purpose, encouraged building outside the city limits, where its restrictions could be defied. Consequently, small tenements, many of them in basements, had been built in the East End, and some of them still remained when we visited the area in 1936. They distressingly reminded us of the days when

Burke and Hare, and other infamous "body snatchers," dug the dead from their graves, and even murdered poor unfortunates, selling the bodies to medical schools for anatomical study.

Dickens's outcry, it is true, had forced the Borough Council to build a block of flats back in 1862, and quite a bit more had been done since the turn of the present century. But with something like 200,000 people—more than the whole population of Plymouth—living in squalid, ancient, two-story slums on 1,900 acres—only a fifth of the area of Plymouth—Lewis Silkin faced a multitude of problems, one of which had stumped all his predecessors and still seemed insoluble. It was the immediate matter of rehousing the people while the slum areas in which they had lived were undergoing reconstruction. That poser would surely make even the Sphinx hesitate thoughtfully.

However, public housing was speeding along in London, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and it was my feeling that Silkin might very well pull off his redevelopment of the East End. If he failed, it certainly wouldn't be for want of trying. And if he was successful, the accomplishment would be in magnitude not unlike the vast reclamations of the Pontine Marshes in Italy and, I reflected, just about as long deferred.

A day or two later, Laura and I called on Dr. Margaret Miller, secretary of the Society of Women Housing Estate Managers. She was a diminutive, brisk woman, all business to her finger tips. We were interested to learn that she was shortly leaving for the United States to study our slum conditions.

"Before discussing what we women housing managers do in England," she began, "I wonder if you'd mind if I checked

with you some of my impressions of the States. Then you can set me straight if I am in error."

"Not at all," I assured her. "We'd be happy to have your views."

"First of all," Dr. Miller said, "I understand that you still have no well-defined national policy on slum clearance. You apparently have not decided just exactly what you want to do. Such uncertainty, I'm afraid, must halt directed effort because it is certain to create hesitation and doubt in your people."

"Score a hit," I said as she paused momentarily.

"Secondly, isn't there an actual psychological barrier? I understand that your country is so wedded to individualism—"

"Rugged individualism," I put in.

"That it is difficult to recognize that government action is absolutely imperative in the clearing of slums. Representatives of private enterprises, like your real-estate men and apartment-house owners, are, I am given to understand, bitterly opposed to government assistance. Public opinion, too, I am told, is completely apathetic. There is no clear recognition, by your society as a whole, that bad housing is a social evil. The average, comfortable American citizen, it seems to me, is inclined to believe that people live in slums either because they prefer to do so, or because they deserve to do so."

"Hit number two," Laura murmured.

"That is a cruel error," Dr. Miller said flatly, "a monstrous error. But until your public conscience is aroused, as is ours in England, there will not be much hope for a comprehensive housing movement in the United States."

"You must have been looking over Uncle Sam's shoulder, Dr. Miller," I replied with a sigh. "Wherever your impressions may have come from, they are as accurate as if you had

seen and heard everything for yourself. I would make but one qualification to your remarks. Your observation that public conscience must be aroused to bring about slum clearance on the large scale needed is certainly applicable. But in America the economic appeal, I am glad to say, is making some headway already. Our businessmen and bankers are learning that it costs more to keep slums than to clear them. And in the present depressed state of our economy, they have found that slum clearance makes jobs for otherwise idle workers. This realization is gradually prodding action while we await the awakening of all our citizens to their social duty in the reclamation of the slums."

"I'm glad," Dr. Miller replied with a smile, "that the movement is gradually catching on in the States; and thank you for verifying my impressions. When your program has gone on far enough to have tens of thousands of houses built—and I'm certain that time will come—then our experience with women managers may be of help to you."

"We understand," Laura said, "that you make rather extensive use of women as managers for your housing developments. How did it come about?"

"It all started with Octavia Hill back in the early eighteen-sixties," Dr. Miller explained. "Coming from a good family, and determined to devote her life to social work, Miss Hill soon discovered that bad housing was a serious handicap in getting anything constructive done. In time she interested a Mr. John Ruskin in purchasing some run-down properties and undertook their management herself. She wanted to demonstrate, as she put it, that 'you cannot deal with people and their houses separately,' if you expect to get the best results. She realized the obvious: that a good home makes better men and women, and children, too. Her basic principles were those of the rugged individualist, Mr. Palmer.

She was unalterably opposed to subsidy, for it was her conviction that employers should pay sufficient wages to their workers to obviate the need for state aid. If, she reasoned, the head of a family was forced to get along without a rent subsidy, his employer would be obliged to pay him an adequate wage. Putting it another way, Octavia Hill maintained that rent subsidies by the state were actually subsidies to employers since they enabled management to pay lower wages."

On hearing this extremely progressive view, I nodded in agreement as Laura glanced at me inquiringly.

"Well," I said, "I am amazed that anyone would have had such a breadth of vision nearly a century ago. But I wonder what would happen if I expressed similar views to some businessmen I know back home."

Dr. Miller smiled and continued the story of Octavia Hill. "She kept rents down without subsidy by enlisting the help of her tenants. She took them into her confidence—making them partners, sort of, in their common enterprise—telling them how much money she had available for repairs and maintenance, and then promising certain improvements by sharing any savings they could help her effect. By this personal approach, wanton damage was soon almost completely eliminated. Many men made small repairs themselves so their wives might get a longed-for cupboard or wash stool purchased from the money that would otherwise have gone for ordinary upkeep of the premises. Octavia Hill cut cleaning costs by organizing bands of young girls to scrub the stairs at six pennies a week, thus providing them with what was welcome pin money in those days." Dr. Miller turned to Laura. "By the way, Mrs. Palmer, you'll be surprised to learn that such a progressive woman was vigorously opposed to woman suffrage."

"I am surprised," Laura agreed. "We had some militant suffragists in the U.S., just as you did here in England, until we got our franchise. Whatever possessed Octavia Hill to take such a stand against her own sex?"

"We must take into consideration," Dr. Miller replied, "the fact that Octavia lived in the Victorian era and was a product of her times. Consequently, she believed that men and women were different in order to complement each other's work. If, she argued, women voted and held public office, they would give less time to the humane work for which they were particularly fitted, such as teaching, nursing, caring for the sick, the aged, and the erring. This forthright, uncompromising philosophy was the cornerstone of Miss Hill's work in low-rent housing. The personal collection of rents gave her the opportunity of seeing her tenants regularly. Anyone else would have been stopped by the hostile reception they gave her as the rent collector. But Octavia Hill persevered despite the frequent necessity of making calls at night, crawling over drunken men in dark corridors, falling into filthy puddles, and enduring evil odors. Despite the most violent insults shouted at her, she remained unmoved and imperturbably went on with her work. Oh, I could go on all day talking about Octavia Hill. The example she left is what spurs other women housing managers to keep on, no matter how difficult the circumstances."

"She was undoubtedly a great woman," Laura quietly remarked. "I wish we had an army of women like her back home."

"Hers is a most inspiring story," I agreed. "But how do things stand today?"

"Women now manage," Dr. Miller told us, "about forty-five thousand housing units. The practice gradually spread throughout England and Scotland, then to Holland, Sweden,

and South Africa. There is even an Octavia Hill Association in Philadelphia. The principle on which we operate is that through weekly visits by women concerning rents and repairs, it is easy to keep an unobtrusive eye on all parts of each house without creating the suspicion that special inspectors invariably arouse. Where differential rents are involved, or rents graded on the basis of ability to pay, a woman can discuss the family budget with the housewife more intimately than a man. And when it comes to settling new tenants from a slum, the trained woman housing manager is again in a better position to secure the co-operation of the housewife in preventing the transfer and spread of vermin in clothing and furnishings. She is also able to offer intelligent advice on purchases for the new house from the tenant's limited funds. Thus she establishes friendly relations with a family even before they move into their new home."

While Dr. Miller was at last catching her breath, I asked where we might see a representative estate managed by a woman.

"Perhaps the most convenient one here in London," she informed us, "would be the Saint Pancras Housing Improvement Society, which has been operating on the Octavia Hill System since 1924. Miss Perry is in charge. I'll arrange a time that will be mutually convenient and then phone you at your hotel."

"That will be fine," I said.

"Before you go," Dr. Miller added, "you may be interested in what one of your former countrymen, Lady Astor, thinks of our work. She wrote a brief foreword to a little pamphlet on the work of women property managers." She turned to one of the bookshelves that lined her office and pulled out a little folder. This is what Lady Astor said:

"It has always seemed to me that if there is one thing in

the world in which women could and should be experts, it was the planning and administration of houses and housing schemes. Practical experience, common sense and imagination, combined with technical training, can transform many of our worst slum areas, as Octavia Hill showed, and I feel sure that it would be to the national advantage if greater use were made of trained women in the management of those new houses and communities which have grown all too slowly."

"Lady Astor," Dr. Miller concluded, "knows whereof she speaks. She is extremely active in the slums of Plymouth as well as in London. We regard her very highly indeed."

Laura and I heartily agreed to these sentiments. After thanking Dr. Miller for her generous time, and wishing her a fruitful trip to the States, we went back to the Carlton.

"Well," I said as we relaxed over a cup of tea in our rooms, "the ladies are certainly not playing second fiddle in slum clearance and housing over here. Dr. Miller is an enthusiast, and no two ways about it."

"It makes me wish," Laura sighed, "that our fine American women could capture Dr. Miller's enthusiasm."

"Her visit to the States should help," I ventured. "When we get back, maybe we can take up where she leaves off."

Laura, as usual, was thinking ahead as she said, "We have no London Limehouse district, but in Philadelphia, where the slum houses are called 'bandboxes,' conditions are just as horrible. Maybe Dr. Miller can persuade American women to study Octavia Hill and swing into action. Then there'd be Ladies in Bandboxes as well as Ladies in Limehouse."

15 SLUM WALLS FALL FOR FATHER JELLICOE

ON RECEIVING a message from Dr. Miller, Laura and I set out for a slum district not far from the center of London where one of the most practical and effective clearances I had ever encountered was gradually taking place under the capable direction of Miss Evelyn E. Perry, F.S.I., the Honourable Secretary of St. Pancras Housing.

This taut, nervous, smiling, little wisp of a woman met us at her modest, immaculate office in the midst of the development. At first I wondered if she came up to the Octavia Hill standard for robust health, she seemed so frail. But we soon saw that her frailty was that of the blooded greyhound—she was literally in a race with the slums and winning out.

The area around her office was in vivid contrast to the beautiful homes of Regent Park nearby. Within a few yards of those mansions were block after block of airless basements, occupied by families whose children looked like "plants kept in a cellar," as Miss Perry told us the Bishop of Winchester had described them. The lack of sunshine and air in those cellars, she said, caused rickets, chest and other diseases, permanently weakened hearts, and brought on much rheumatic fever. Infant mortality, it was no surprise, was way above

the average for the city. Such conditions sounded to us like Moscow.

In soliciting funds for their work, Miss Perry said they brought the situation home to the upper classes by a strong opening statement in their prospectus: "Except for an accident of birth, we would be appealing for you, instead of to you."

"That's really a jolt to make us all think," I observed.

Laura was looking out a window. "By the way," she inquired, "do these people all come from this neighborhood?"

"Yes, indeed," Miss Perry replied. "It is our chief aim to rehouse the people in the immediate vicinity as the slums are demolished. The great advantage of our scheme is that by building blocks of flats one at a time we dehouse no one. When they are finished, we provide accommodations for the tenants of homes required for demolition before we start building on the site from which those tenants move into the new houses. Thus we gradually rehouse all residents in a slum area without disturbing the neighborhood pattern. That includes the slum merchants for whom we build small stores. So you see, one hundred per cent are put in new buildings on the same site, with practically no housing problem during construction because of the way we decant them."

"That seems to me," I commented, "the most sensible solution for the interim housing problem. My wife and I saw it being done in Italy, though your method of decanting is somewhat different here."

"Well, there is some resistance to it, especially by the large Local Authorities who like to let one big, general contract and get the building over. They claim decanting runs up construction costs. But we have not found it too expensive, and it keeps our neighborhoods intact. There is no scatter-

ing of the poor people all over the city with many never coming back, and others finding two moves a severe strain on their slender pocketbooks. The wage earners also continue their present jobs and are not put to the extra expense of long tram fares."

Miss Perry was thoughtfully silent for a moment. "I was thinking," she explained, "how incredible it is what just one determined individual can do in clearing slums. Except for Father Jellicoe, there would be no Saint Pancras Housing. He died only last year, at the early age of thirty-six. He actually burned himself out; but I know he felt it was worth while."

"Please tell us about him," Laura urged.

"When Father Jellicoe came here as a missioner of the Church of England," Miss Perry said, "he found the people living like pigs. They weren't drunkards or criminals; they were respectable working folk. Father Jellicoe learned that they didn't live in their verminous, insanitary hovels by choice, but because they had to live near their jobs and the slums were all they could find.

"The good Father discovered something else, too—that if anything was to be done about those slums, he would have to do it himself. So first of all, he persuaded and bullied a little money from people who could afford to give. Then he bought two old houses to recondition. But the fixing up of old houses had to be abandoned as the expense for the results obtained was too great, and besides, it was simply impossible to get rid of the vermin.

"Those first two houses, however, enabled Father Jellicoe to get his foot in the door of slum clearance. Octavia Hill, you may remember, also started in a very small way. She was able to purchase but three houses. They were in such foul shape that even the banisters had been burned for fire-

wood. When she spoke to the former owner about the large amount of rents in arrears, he shrugged and explained that he wasn't too fussy about collecting the rents because, being an undertaker, he made his money from the deaths he got out of the houses."

"Just as Dickens wrote," Laura remarked with a shiver.

"Thankfully," Miss Perry went on, "it's not like that any more. Neither of these great leaders started in a big way. But their forthright action to get rid of a few slum houses caused others to rally round them. It seems to me that all one has to do is to roll up his or her sleeves and go to work on just one little slum. Then the miracle happens. The slum walls come tumbling down, and Providence helps out with the rest.

"We have often found that Providence acts through the Rotary Clubs. The one here has met in our Town Hall with the Mayor, Councilor Hewson, the Rotary President, Mr. Arthur Mortimer, and many others to help with our work. The Rotary Club of Southampton also co-operates there with the Swaythling Housing Society, which is like ours. Sir Edwin Bonham Carter was the speaker at a recent Rotary meeting devoted exclusively to Housing Society work. The same keen interest in the work of Public Utility Housing Societies is found in the Rotary Clubs of many other cities, too. But here," Miss Perry added, "I fear I've talked too much. Let's get a bit of air and see the flats, shall we?"

First we visited a slum block that was being demolished. About half of the houses had already been wrecked, and the new construction was well along. Each old, three-story brick house, cheek by jowl with its neighbor, had a disgustingly filthy basement and a littered rear area with a catchall shed. In one back yard a group of children gathered as soon as the news that someone was taking movies got around. The

youngsters were jolly enough, but their untidiness made Laura feel like giving them a good scrubbing. The mothers clustered around, hunched in tattered shawls, as my camera took in the scene.

We escaped from our intent audience through a gate in a board fence. Climbing five outside flights of stairs by way of open balconies serving each flat, we reached the roof of a new building and forgot our breathlessness in amazement at what we saw. The roof was paved with colored ceramic tiles and completely enclosed by a parapet wall with two feet of transparent plate glass above it. There was a wading pool, play slides, and a sand pile. The play area adjoined a well-windowed room that was the day nursery. In a niche of its exterior wall was a terra-cotta statue of a child, head thrown back and a smile on its face as it overlooked the fountain cascading down before it.

"I didn't tell you about this," Miss Perry confessed with a laugh, "because I wanted it to be a surprise. Isn't it grand?"

"You're the world's best slum-clearance promoter," Laura declared. "A few minutes ago we were with those pitiful children in their terrible back yards. Now we are in a paradise for their former playmates. It's like a fairy tale, and I'm sure it must be to these happy youngsters."

I stepped to the edge of the roof. Immediately below me was the old slum. There were the kids in the dirty junk-strewn back yards. Across the wooden fence was more new housing. Its play yard, bordered by the flowers of the first-floor windows, was alive with swinging, shouting older children. In the U-shaped court of our building was an ornamental drying yard for laundry. The clothes poles formed a circle and on top of each one was a metal elf. The clothes lines extended, from a regular Maypole in the center, like

the spokes of a wheel to the gaily topped poles that formed the perimeter.

There are no Blue Mondays here, I thought as I returned to Miss Perry and Laura.

A quick investigation disclosed at least nine more Housing Societies in the London area, similar to St. Pancras, though most of them were larger. In addition, there were at least five great housing trusts, set up through the bequests of philanthropists. One of them, I learned, had been founded in 1837 by George Peabody, an American businessman. Altogether, these trusts provided over 14,000 homes at low rents.

All this, mind you, was just in London. The inevitable comparison with the little that had been done by our own philanthropists to house the needy in America brought home to us how far behind we were.

A note had come from John Wrigley, asking us for tea on Sunday, July 12. We accepted with alacrity, knowing it would be a real treat to visit the man who, in 1934, had been drafting the Overcrowding Law, which was now in force.

We had some trouble finding the Wrigley home in the suburbs of London. It finally turned up on a country lane at the brow of a hill from which the meadows of rural England fell away in fold after fold of lush green. We had our tea, and something stouter, on the rear terrace. Then Wrigley settled back in his lawn chair and, with a twinkle in his spectacled, blue-gray eyes, began the story he knew we had come to hear.

"The Overcrowding Law was introduced to Parliament," he said, "shortly after we had our talks about it, Mr. Palmer. Its passage developed a strange paradox. Immediately the Local Authorities from all over the place protested that the

standards were too low. We had felt it was quite daring just to make any overcrowding illegal. For example, where it was usual that a large kitchen served for living purposes, too, we counted it as a room where people could also sleep; but a small kitchen not usually used for living purposes was ruled out. This made a big difference in the degree of overcrowding shown by the local surveys.

"The Leeds City Council, however, gauged their needs by a private bedroom for parents, and enough additional sleeping rooms so that the remaining occupants of the house—those of opposite sexes and not married but ten years old or more—did not sleep in the same room. That, you see, eliminates a kitchen, living room, or parlor for sleeping purposes. So if we took the Leeds rule for the nine million houses of England and Wales, we could find something like eight hundred and fifty thousand instead of just three hundred and fifty thousand who by our standards were violating the law."

"Do you," I asked, "intend to amend it with a more exacting standard?"

"Heavens no! We will have trouble enough as it is to enforce the Overcrowding Law as it stands now. That we needed the law at all," Wrigley pensively continued, "really forces an embarrassing admission about my country, for it reemphasized that the wages paid by business and industry—yes, by government, as well—are too low for poorer workers to afford adequate housing without state aid.

"Someday you in America will probably face up to the same facts. Maybe not until your next great depression. When that time comes and you want to make jobs and also produce something worth while instead of putting people on the dole, you may decide to take a leaf from our book by passing your own Overcrowding Law. That forces construc-

tion of housing and solves the unemployment problem as well."

"Perhaps it would be better," I said reflectively, "if we didn't wait for another depression."

As we drove to London, there flashed back in memory that Roosevelt in 1930, while governor of New York, had vetoed legislation that would have permitted more than one family to occupy a single apartment of a tenement house.

Here was Roosevelt, as governor of New York, enforcing a law against overcrowding two years before the British had undertaken to prepare legislation for the same purpose. There was no further uncertainty in my mind about Roosevelt's comprehensive understanding of the slum problem. Why, I had not even mentioned to Hopkins legislation to prohibit overcrowding, thinking it too advanced to be discussed until later.

Next on our schedule was a visit to Becontree, the mammoth housing development of the London County Council, which provided homes for more than 125,000 people. En route from London, we had driven through the crawling slums of Limehouse, not quite as bad as in Dickens's time, thanks to Becontree, which had absorbed many families from that squalid district.

Captain Amies, the manager, unfolded his six-feet-four and momentarily removed his pipe as his face broke into an expansive smile.

"So you are from the States and interested in housing, eh?" he drawled. "Well, we have plenty of it here. So much you'd get browned off if you tried to see the whole estate. My suggestion is that we have a spot of coffee and do some talking before we leave the office."

In came the coffee for the "elevenses" of the day, and we settled back in comfort to hear leisurely Captain Amies.

"Let's take the figures first," he suggested. "There are 26,000 houses, 130,000 population, 27 churches, 30 schools, 400 shops, 21 rent offices, 500 acres of parks and open spaces—total cost about 13,000,000 pounds."

I was duly impressed by these astronomical figures, which added up to the biggest project of its kind in the world.

"We are only eleven miles from the center of London," Captain Amies continued, "about a half-hour by train. We're a working-class town. In some ways that hurts. We've tried to get private enterprise to build for upper middle-class people, but they won't because of the bad approach through the industrial, dock, and slum districts of London's East End. In another way, it helps to be a workers' town since factories follow the labor pool. There were practically no industries in this area when we came. Now there are the Ford and Briggs auto-body plants at nearby Dagenham, and many other factories, all because they can get labor right here. A lot of folks used to be clerks in London, but the weekly fare to the city is about eight shillings—a big item in the family budget—so many of them have switched to jobs in this neighborhood."

"Transportation for the worker," I interjected, "is a common problem everywhere."

"And a most difficult one. I say"—Captain Amies glanced at the clock—"if we want to get on with the job of seeing the estate, we had best start right now."

When we reached the residential area, Laura remarked about the well-clipped hedges that lined all the streets, and asked if the tenants maintained them.

"We look after the sixty miles along the street, but the householders take care of the additional two hundred and

twenty miles of hedges that separate the rear gardens," grunted Captain Amies as he mopped his brow. "Now suppose we stop at a house whose garden won first prize in the area."

All was immaculate, and the aproned wife made us feel at home. The rear yard was a profusion of blooming shrubs, flowers, and well-tended grass. But so were the yards of all the neighbors.

"You're noticing our architecture," the Captain observed, as we drove past rows of two-story houses relieved by attractive, low-roofed, individual homes. "We have variety, and those roof tiles lend a spot of color."

No residential building was more than two stories high. The entire estate was dotted with numberless small green plots and playing fields. There was much to see, but we could do little more than sample the tremendous development.

We drove back to London through the vast expanse of slums that still remained. The violent contrast between them and Becontree was a silent but vigorous plea for public housing.

We had planned to drive to Scotland on Wednesday but postponed the trip to attend the dedication of Brightwells, a scheme of the Fulham Housing Improvement Society, on July 16. Mr. W. R. Davidge, a prominent architect and town planner of London, said that the little development was quite out of the ordinary.

He was right. Not only did we find new features in the buildings, which had been designed by a woman architect, but the importance given the occasion again emphasized the influential backing in England of housing for the poor.

In the center of the roomy forecourt of the thirty new flats was a platform for the ceremony. There sat the Lord

Mayor, wearing the great gold chain with the seal of his office around his neck, and beside him the Lady Mayoress. Accompanying them was the mace-bearer with the mace. H.R.H. Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, was the ranking guest, although the Bishop of London and other higher-ups, including some great financial and industrial leaders, were on the platform, too.

When she formally declared the buildings open, Her Royal Highness seemed to speak from considerable personal experience with housing. She said that she thought all social work should start from housing "and proceed upward" from that point. It was so obvious, in her opinion, that it was better to have healthy citizens, which was impossible in slums, than to maintain hospitals needed because of disease that came from overcrowded and unwholesome houses. So evident was this that she wondered why it had taken the people "so long to realize this transparent truth."

It turned out that Miss Perry, of St. Pancras, had helped organize the Fulham Society and a Miss Landsdown was the manageress. Since the buildings were designed by a woman and managed by a woman, I found many new and practical ideas had been included. This all-woman project seemed to be off to a good start.

Miss Perry introduced us to Lady Marjorie Pentland, who had given the St. Pancras Society money for a complete block of flats that we had seen nearing completion. Incidentally, Pentland House, the name of the block, was designed with one unfinished wall to be ready for an additional wing when more money became available.

Lady Pentland mentioned that her mother was Lady Aberdeen, who had been instrumental in founding the Canadian Housing Centre in Toronto. It was "like mother like daughter" in this case, for Lady Pentland was extremely

active in the work of the Housing Centre of London. The principal object of this nonpartisan, nonpolitical organization was stated as "to constitute a common meeting ground for organizations and individuals engaged in housing."

That this main objective was being achieved was daily demonstrated through the close liaison between officials of the various housing associations whose headquarters were in the Housing Centre. Among them were The National Federation of Housing Societies, the Society of Women Housing Managers, the Women's Advisory Housing Council, the Garden Cities and Town Planning Association, and others.

The public was kept informed of new laws and developments through traveling exhibits, films, lectures, and literature. Although the Centre was only two years old, its monthly bulletin reached members throughout Great Britain and in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and the United States. The staff was then busy organizing the "New Homes for Old" exhibition, which would be shown at Olympia in September under the patronage of King Edward VIII. It would then tour the schools.

This three-ring housing circus was efficiently conducted by Professor Patrick Abercrombie, noted British architect and town planner, as chairman, assisted by a corps of capable women such as Mrs. Madge Waller in charge of publicity, Miss M. C. Solomon, librarian, and Miss J. G. Ledebrer, handling the exhibits. Laura and I were much impressed by the ceremony and by the distinguished people who participated in it so enthusiastically.

16 HUNDRED NEW TOWNS

THE NEW YORK architect, Henry Wright, who had accompanied the British housing experts to Atlanta, suggested it would be worth while to see Sir Theodore Chambers, chairman of the Board of Welwyn Garden City, a new town built from scratch by private enterprise about twenty miles from London.

When we visited him, Sir Theodore said the estate included both upper- and working-class housing for a population of some 12,000 people. Rent was kept as low as possible on the workers' houses, with nothing being charged for the land, and about 4 per cent on the buildings. Sir Theodore explained that most of the money was made from the middle- and higher-income groups, the shops and the factories.

"I believe," Sir Theodore said earnestly, "that if the Ford enterprises would undertake to build a city for, say, two hundred and fifty thousand people, they would be doing the world a great service. Egyptians, Romans, and the Greeks built great cities from nothing; but no one in this civilization is doing such a job. It should be undertaken by those of great wealth in the United States. If they did so, they would find the result to be a tremendous financial success, as well as a great human service."

Laura and I visited Welwyn the next day and found that it lived up to our expectations in every respect. A modern town, it was operated like any well-run profit-making business. John F. Eccles, the manager, drove us around.

"Why so much vacant land," I inquired, "in the center of your city? With ten thousand people, I'd think your downtown area would have more shops, or at least not so many unimproved commercial sites."

"The reason is because we haven't grown up yet," Eccles explained. "We plan for a population of forty to fifty thousand. If we built and tenanted shops for that many in the center, while we have only ten thousand residents, the merchants and we would fail as we waited for those additional thousands of buyers. And yet we must reserve enough land downtown to be able to expand the shopping area when our city reaches its maximum growth. Meanwhile, we do most of the business through neighborhood stores. I'll show you what I mean. Did you happen to notice that long, low building across the square from our offices? Well, that's the main branch of Welwyn Stores. Now, see this little building on that corner at your left?"

I turned and saw an attractive, low-gabled shop with one or two other neighborhood stores adjoining it.

"That's a branch of the general store downtown," Eccles said. "It serves this particular area and sells food, clothing, coals, shoes, and about everything else. Because the entire system is owned by us, the townspeople got the impression they were being done in by a monopoly. One of their chief grouses was lack of variety. So they began to shop away from Welwyn.

"We solved that problem by building a limited parade of shops downtown and in each quadrant of the city, and putting in one shop each for the greengrocer, the chemist [drugstore],

the ironmonger [hardware store], and such. The result is that our local residents are once more shopping in Welwyn and feel that they are getting a square deal. Of course, it's mostly psychological because we did not materially change our merchandising or pricing policy. For a time the new shops cut down the business of the general store, but only temporarily. In fact, the competition from the new shops has really been only with the stores outside the city.

"In waiting to establish these separate businesses in Welwyn until our population had grown sufficiently to assure enough purchasing power so that the new merchant could succeed, we were able to secure much higher rentals than if we had permitted these storekeepers to come in before there was a demand for their merchandise. Also, giving them exclusive rights for a limited time has protected them against cutthroat competition."

Eccles overwhelmed us with printed material upon our return to his office and promised to send us more data and pictures later on.

While visiting Atlanta in 1934, Sir Raymond Unwin had urged that I see Letchworth, the first garden city—Welwyn was the second. Now the opportunity had come, and Sir Raymond arranged a meeting with Barry Parker.

The records showed that Barry Parker, F.R.I.B.A., P.P.T.P.I., and his brother-in-law, Sir Raymond Unwin, F.R.I.B.A., P.P.R.I.B.A.—to give them all the letters they had so well earned—had been commissioned as the two outstanding planners to make the dream of Ebenezer Howard come true. That was way back in 1903. The site selected was 4,500 acres, 34 miles from London.

Arriving at Mr. Parker's home on Saturday, July 11, our host and his gracious wife greeted us in their homey living

room, where "elevenses" coffee promptly appeared, although it wasn't yet ten o'clock.

In his late sixties, Barry Parker was an older edition of Becontree's Captain Amies. Both were tall and slow moving, but there the resemblance ended. Amies slicked back his hair, and Parker's tumbled down his neck like Lloyd George's. Amies was smooth-shaven, while Parker's walrus mustache out-Britished the best in England.

"Before I tell you about Letchworth," he said over his coffee cup, "I'd like to inquire about what you are doing in America. Unwin has told me that you are getting on with the job of clearing slums. I believe he mentioned one place where demolition is well over and some construction started. Let me see. Someplace in Georgia—Atlantis, was it?"

"Yes," I replied. "Atlanta is where the first slum-clearance project ever tackled by our government is now about completed. We wrecked most of the slums on the site in 1934 and—"

Here the lovely Mrs. Parker hitched to the edge of the overstuffed davenport and leaned toward me.

"Oh, Mr. Palmer!" she burst out. "Do you mean that you just 'wrecked' those buildings? You literally tore them to the ground? And just a moment ago you spoke about 'tackling' a job. I presume that involves diving at it and grappling it with all your might. You Americans are so forthright. You use so few words to say what you mean. I wish my husband's architect friends were more like that. They take so long to say what they have in mind. The speeches during their Institute sessions just never seem to end."

"There, there, my dear." Parker's slow-starting, booming laugh soon filled the room. "Ahem, fact is, I'm among the chief offenders on that score. Haw! Haw!"

When the spate of laughter, in which Laura and I joined,

had ended, I asked our genial host about the siting of industry.

"All nuisance factories, that is, those that emit smoke or produce odors," he explained, "are placed so that the prevailing breezes will blow the smoke and odors away from the city."

"And why," I inquired, "hasn't Letchworth reorganized into a straight profit-making enterprise as Welwyn has?"

Mr. Parker fingered his mustache while looking me straight in the eye.

"That is a good question," he said, "and I'm glad you asked it. Both Letchworth and Welwyn were started with the same purpose in mind: to make better communities; to give people better living—not to make more money. That's why each town limited its dividends. We in Letchworth still do, and here is why.

"It goes back to Ebenezer Howard. He felt that the unearned increment that accrues to land through population increase should not go to the landowners. Instead, Howard believed that all residents of the community should benefit. After all, the people are the ones who brought about the rise in land values of the city by being there. Howard maintained, therefore, that the people should profit accordingly. We still subscribe to that principle and retain title to all land, letting it out on long-term leases. When those leases fall in, or expire, as I believe you would say in the States, the increase on reletting will be captured for the people."

I kept plying Mr. Parker with questions, and Laura put in an occasional query from the woman's viewpoint. All too soon we reluctantly left the delightful Parkers.

We were fast finding that there was much to be said for garden cities, whether they followed the original precepts of Ebenezer Howard, as carried on at Letchworth by Barry

Parker, or were instigated by the profit motive, as at Welwyn under Sir Theodore Chambers.

Since Ebenezer Howard's conception of the garden city more than a generation before, and the successful creation of Letchworth and Welwyn, the new town idea had gained many supporters. Chief among the more imaginative was A. Trystan Edwards, who envisaged the movement as a solution for most British ills. We met for tea and talk in his quarters at 3 Gray's Inn Square one afternoon.

An architect by profession, Edwards's enthusiasm burst all bounds. Ancient Gray's Inn Square was an appropriate setting for his dress but not for his modern ideas. This bald, chunky little man in patched tweeds hesitantly welcomed me to his apartment with old-world grace. At first I attributed his apparent timidity to some sort of embarrassment, but I soon realized that it was occasioned by a marked impediment in his speech. What in most people would have been a handicap, in Edwards became an asset. Had his tongue not tripped at times, I never could have kept up with the torrent of schemes he fired at me.

"The bounders think they have defeated my Hundred New Towns for Britain!" he erupted. "The sound-money men are all against me. Lloyd George understood the idea and might have led the way, but Neville Chamberlain and others of that ilk blocked him."

Edwards had so much to tell, and apparently had gone so long without a listener, that the words kept sticking on his tongue. To get them off required strict attention to the job at hand, and his tea grew cold.

The story came out bit by bit and developed into one of almost fanatical concentration on a single idea. His experiences paralleled those in *Little Dorrit.* To Edwards, all of

Britain—not just Whitehall as in Dickens's time—must have seemed a vast "Circumlocution Department."

Edwards's plan was amazing in its concept—to build, within ten years, at strategic locations throughout England, Scotland, and Wales, 100 new towns of 50,000 population each, totaling all together some 5,000,000 inhabitants.

Edwards maintained that an all-out attack was the only way to do the job. He said it was nothing more than a colonization problem and pointed out that the British were great colonizers.

Rehousing in the existing, overcrowded towns involved high land costs and grave decanting problems. By building new towns on cheap land before old slums were demolished, these problems would be solved in an orderly and economical manner. Furthermore, the old towns would benefit by the welcome breathing space resulting from slum clearance.

Out came a book Edwards had published at his own expense. The list of those who sponsored the project as "worthy of the fullest investigation and discussion" included distinguished leaders from all fields. With these sponsors as the spearhead, Edwards met the political aspects of his scheme head on. His plea was to view the plan in the same perspective that the nation had viewed the war.

The objective was housing and jobs for all. The job opportunity was realistically analyzed. First it was pointed out that 85 per cent of the money spent in construction and fabrication of materials went to wages. With this income, farm products, clothing, and a host of other items, could be purchased, thus catalyzing the entire economy. The conclusion was drawn that if the then existing, unplanned industrial expansion was channeled into the new towns, employment opportunities would be provided for 750,000 workers in 10 years in the 100 new towns.

With a broad brush, finances were next put on the gigantic canvas. The million houses were estimated to cost from two to two and a half billion dollars, and the factories, stores, utilities, and land a like amount. Spread over ten years, the five billion dollars would make the cost five hundred million dollars a year to see the job through.

These astronomical figures gave me a jolt, but they didn't seem to faze Edwards. How did this half-billion a year compare with present national expenditures? Why, the British government was already paying out 50 per cent more than that—three-quarters of a billion dollars—every year for unemployment and poor relief alone!

"Just fancy," Edwards vehemently declared, "all the savings on that item that would come about through the jobs the hundred towns could provide!"

Sweat was now rolling down my host's bald brow. The words still did not come fast enough for him. Snatching up his book, he pointed to certain pages. Still it was no go. Finally it dawned on him that I could not catch up with his thinking of years by scanning his book for a few minutes. So he handed me a copy to study at my leisure. Then he quickly retrieved the volume to inscribe and date it with a flourish.

This seemed to relax him somewhat. His head of steam subsided a little. But it was only for a moment. There were too many words in him for any human to contain, and out they came once more.

Again it was the financing. Relatively large, yes! But beyond Britain's capacity? No! In fact, the job could be made to finance itself without loans! Edwards obviously enjoyed the amazement on my face which that startling statement produced. Was I open-minded enough to listen to the unorthodox?

My host settled back in his chair, slightly more composed. The fascinating story he told concerned a financial technique employed by the Isle of Guernsey to build a "parade of shops" well over a century ago.

In 1820 the little island's exchequer was in such desperate straits that it could neither borrow nor raise through taxation the 5,500 pounds required to construct a much-needed market building. In this quandary, and having the power to issue its own currency, it printed one-pound notes to the amount needed, to be retired from the market rents.

The rent totaled 600 pounds a year. As it was collected, government officials annually burned it up. Thus the entire issue was retired in less than ten years. No interest had been paid. No sinking fund was necessary. Also, there had been no runaway inflation. That was because the currency was anchored to a real-estate base instead of a gold base. Gold of itself earned nothing, but real estate did. Therefore, no loan was needed and the "parade of shops" financed themselves.

So happy were the islanders that they used the same device to build new wharves for shipping, and for other self-liquidating projects. All went so well that prosperity returned to the Isle of Guernsey. For a period of twenty years the local parliament successfully met its financial problems in this way.

Then, Edwards related, the international bankers stepped into the picture. Those financiers who had turned down the original request for a loan to erect the market building at last woke up to the fact that the islanders were somehow getting along very well without them. And what was worse, the bankers hadn't gotten any interest payments from this tight little island!

Well, well—the money-changers on Threadneedle Street

in the great City of London finally decided—something must be done about this sad and profitless state of affairs. So the bankers craftily persuaded the Privy Council to withdraw the power to issue currency from the parliament of the Isle of Guernsey.

Not, however, until the islanders' financial technique had demonstrated its practicability. They still had their market building and their wharves, all obtained without having paid a penny of interest. Industry had been stimulated, the exchange of goods and services was accelerated, and unemployment had disappeared.

Enthusiastic as Edwards was over the ingenious economics of his proposal, he was even more excited about the design. His basic plan envisaged a circular town with wedge-shaped land-use zones. The points of these segments converged on a civic center in the heart of the town. Radial roads ran to the periphery like the spokes of a wheel. Thus residential areas adjoined industrial areas, separated by adequate screening, and within walking distance from home to work.

When it came to the design of the individual blocks for residential use, Edwards reached the heights of his vivid imagination. While twelve houses per acre was generally accepted as maximum land coverage, Edwards stepped it up to forty per acre by building row housing around hollow quadrangles to be used for recreation.

But if all or part of the quadrangle was to be used for recreation, where, I wanted to know, would clothes be dried? And how could mothers tend children too young for group play?

Edwards snatched the *One Hundred Towns for Britain* book from the table. Again, speech was too slow for him and he pointed to one of the many colored plates. There were the third stories of his houses. The flat roofs were designed

as ideal laundry and play yards, even to sandboxes, tubs, and clotheslines. Solid walls, each with its flowered trellis, running at right angles to the street and across the rear toward the interior quadrangle, gave each family complete privacy. The front was protected by an ornamental parapet, low enough to let in the sun but high enough to pen in the children. That section away from the street was partially roofed over to shelter the laundry tubs and the stairs down to the second floor. Edwards was truly the friend of the mother.

When I inquired how he had happened on such a design, he told of talks with "gentlemen of the slums" and their wives. It was, he said, no good to plan for them but without them. They knew best what they wanted and needed. No multistoried barracks from which the tired housewife was too worn out at the end of a day of drudgery to walk down and up four flights of stairs to give her baby the air even when the sun shone. No cottages at twelve to the acre and far from work, "set out like cabbages," where gregarious, friendly living hadn't a chance.

I had heard an amazing story from the stumbling lips of an amazing man. Exhausted though he was from fighting for his plan, impoverished from trying to promote it, he still stoutly maintained that it would yet prevail.

The one-pound note I passed to him for associate membership in his group seemed most welcome.

17 SITTING BATHS AND SCOTSMEN

NEXT LAURA and I drove 1,200 miles through England and Scotland, studying housing. Our old friend, John Martin, secretary of the National Housing and Town Planning Council, had written of our coming to officials in Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Edinburgh.

The amount of slum clearance in the midlands went London one better. The visit to Leeds brought out much that was new to us, possibly because of our dynamic host, the Reverend Charles Jenkinson of St. Barnabas Vicarage. With raincoat flapping from his tall, angular frame and slouch hat pulled over his eyes, he looked and acted little like a vicar and, as it turned out, knew as much about construction as a contractor.

Jenkinson, we learned, was so much in favor of women housing workers that there was a requirement for women to constitute at least 25 per cent of the staff, and at the same pay as men.

Dr. Jenkinson was a strong supporter of differential renting, although, as he put it, "Some people are liars and cheats, and the only way to satisfy everybody and be fair to honest people is to check wages when determining rents."

As we drove from Jenkinson's office to the Quarry Hill

clearance, our mentor expounded some general conclusions he had reached.

"Housing must be provided," he stated firmly, "for all who need it, and it must be the kind each needs. Old as well as young are to be considered. Dwellings for the aged, that is, for couples past the childbearing stage, have never been provided in adequate quantity. We find that they fill a great void."

We reached a twenty-six-acre site in the heart of Leeds. Where hundreds of slum hovels once crowded, not one remained. Dr. Jenkinson told us of his special trip to France to look into the kind of construction we saw being used, known as the Mopin System. Jenkinson had also brought from France the Garchey System of refuse disposal. In place of garbage cans and incinerators, kitchens were equipped with refuse chutes incorporated into each sink. Both the dry and wet waste were drawn by suction to a central point and put through hydroextractors. The dry residue was then automatically conveyed to furnaces and burned. The heat generated was used to supply the communal laundry with hot water.

Soon we were off to the Gipton Housing Estate.

"Most of the families," Dr. Jenkinson explained, "need more furniture. The dealers who sold them on credit charged extortionist prices at usorious rates of interest. I presume they do the same in the States. To stop this exploitation, we devised a hire-purchase system. Payments are made weekly and spread out for more than two years. Over seventy per cent of the families now being rehoused used the service."

As we entered the great Gipton Housing Estate, we found that open spaces predominated throughout the 360 acres. The 2,800 flats and cottages alternated, with here and there the housing for the aged sprinkled in beside the children's play-

grounds. Dr. Jenkinson was proud of such well-planned siting. It gave the oldsters a chance to keep their eyes on the youngsters; and it afforded the youngsters an opportunity to brighten up the oldsters' spirits with their cheery shouts while at their games.

"Oh, my, oh, my!" Dr. Jenkinson suddenly exclaimed as he leaned forward and touched the driver. "We were planning to show our American friends the sitting baths and the back-to-back stoves. Just stop at any of these cottages for the aging."

As we stepped from the car, a cottage door opened, and an elderly housewife came out to greet us. If there was to be any visiting, she wanted her flat to be the one chosen. In the living room was what appeared to be a normal fireplace. At the grate a tea kettle simmered.

"Looks to be an ordinary grate, doesn't it?" Dr. Jenkinson observed. "But that tiny flame under the teakettle here in the living room does the cooking in the scullery and heats the hot water, too. And we haven't shown you the best part. Let's go to the scullery."

There we found that this Rube Goldberg device had been built into the wall between the two rooms. In lieu of the grate in the living room, the kitchen side had a cooking range. The hot water for household use came from a boiler in the chimney. Aside from the low initial cost there were savings in space and economy of operation.

Our enthusiastic guide next took us to the bath where there was a "sitting tub," also a great space saver. It had as many Rube Goldberg contraptions as the back-to-back grates. The tub was only about two by three feet but deep enough so that the bather could submerge to the chest as the lower part was shaped like a chair. For ease of access, the entire fixture was countersunk in the floor when used primarily for bathing. But when installed in the kitchen, it was not counter-

sunk and became a wash-basin-laundry-tub-draining-board-clothes-ringer table and bath all in one. The hospitable lady of the house was loud in praise of her back-to-back stove and sitting bath. Laura and I began to understand how the British managed to keep costs down and use space so efficiently.

As we drove back to Leeds, Dr. Jenkinson summed up briefly.

"With the incomes of so many of the people too low to pay rent that is remunerative to private-venture builders, more and more must be done by the state. Much of the high cost is by way of interest on borrowed money. The answer may come from grappling with our present restrictive monetary system."

As we parted I wondered to myself if Dr. Jenkinson had ever heard of Trystan Edwards.

Upon our arrival in Edinburgh, Mr. Ross at the Housing Authority said, "Building-trade workers go at housing last, and leave it first when other jobs are to be had because they earn more for the time being through overtime. We have considered countering by guaranteeing fifty-one weeks of work a year. No such scheme is yet in effect, but something of the sort may be necessary eventually. The annual wage will lower building costs and still afford the worker greater annual income through more constant employment, although the wage per unit produced may be less."

Our discussion then wandered to land and management problems. I voiced a tentative opinion that there seemed much to be said for the differential-renting policy used at Leeds, and Mr. Ross agreed.

"However," he observed, "it is not easy to change from flat rents to differential rents. We found that out up in Aberdeen, where we had rent strikes when the Local Authorities

raised the rent of those whose incomes justified a higher figure. The Scotsman just will not put out more than his neighbor for the same accommodation. Besides, both tenants and politicians resented the attempt to get correct information on incomes."

In Liverpool, tall, intense Mr. L. H. Keay, O.B.E., F.R.I.B.A., and director of Housing, was ready to see that we had a fruitful visit. First he emphasized that he was a civil servant and the need for such status.

"Consequently," he continued, "I am comparatively free of local political pressure. How else could I have installed and maintained differential renting with its means test as a requisite, when the local Labour Party is violently against the means test and the local Conservative Party fears it? And how could I have employed so many women when local councillors would rather have men who are their own political pawns. A woman can fool a man, but she cannot fool another woman. As most of our contact in housing management has to do with the housewife, I prefer to have a woman, instead of a man, handle the housewife for me."

The Beau Street area, to which we were taken, was to Liverpool what the Quarry Hill section was to Leeds. This project involved the rebulding of sixty-one acres of slums in the heart of Liverpool. The job would take four years and continuously employ five hundred building-trade workers. Families already living on the site were being decanted temporarily to the outskirts of Liverpool. They were placed in suburban public housing already built and would go back to their former neighborhood as soon as their section was completed, much as had been done in Italy.

The next morning, Mr. J. K. Costain, of the famous building firm that bore his name, came in from nearby Birkenhead

to breakfast with us at the Adelphia Hotel. During the leisurely meal, the Lord Bishop of the neighboring Isle of Man stopped by for a word with his friend, Mr. Costain, and then spoke to us.

"Coming from the States," he said in a courteous, easy manner, "you may scarcely believe that when I was vicar of a Liverpool slum with about eight thousand parishioners, I discovered in my visits to their homes that more than twenty-five hundred were crowded into hovels below the level of the street." The Bishop shuddered and raised his hands in horror. "You, of course, Mr. Palmer, have nothing like that in your own country."

"Were there windows," I asked, "in those cellar rooms, my Lord Bishop?"

"Oh, yes," he assured me. "But they were small and just above the level of the ground so, while there was some ventilation, there was rarely any sunlight. And conditions inside were indescribable. Thank God we have now cleared that slum and rehoused its people. Your modern, bustling country would never have stood for such an awful place."

"But they did have windows," I pointed out. "In New York City, however, I am ashamed to confess, there are over two hundred thousand occupied rooms which have no windows at all!"

"That cannot be; it cannot be!" the Lord Bishop protested. "How did such a sorry situation ever come about?"

I then described the narrow, five-story structures of New York, a hundred feet deep, side by side, tier upon tier, with eight rooms in a row on each floor like a train of cars; hence the term "railroad" tenements. Only the room in front and the one in the rear had windows. The other six had none at all. In 1888 a law was passed requiring a four-feet, eight-inch light shaft. These "light" shafts were often five stories

high. Naples had nothing on New York when it came to a glimpse of the sun only at noon. Tens of thousands of windowless rooms and light-shaft rooms were still occupied in New York.

Those who knew them best were those who lived there. Some were unemployed artists. WPA furnished them materials to paint with while on relief, just as WPA furnished other unemployed with the tools of their trade or profession.

There were two well-remembered pictures in the Housing Division at Washington loaned by WPA and done by an artist who lived in the slums. Both were of drab colors. No other colors would do.

One showed a pinched-faced mother, tattered shawl around her shoulders, wizened baby in her arms, calling down the Stygian "light" shaft from her only window, "Janitor, please tell me is the sun shining? I want to know whether to take my baby out." The other pictured an emaciated little girl peering over the window sill at a ragged boy below her in the "light" shaft. Her finger pointed at a can on the sill in which a scraggy plant was momentarily caught in a pencil of light. She was saying, "I know there is a God, because sometimes He sends the sunshine to my flower."

Over in nearby Bebington that afternoon, we met Miss Alice Samuels, who had added so much to the discussions in Atlanta with the British housing experts two years before. We switched from our Ford to her little Austin. Laura eased into the back seat while I crowded into the far corner of what remained of the two front seats after Miss Samuels had adjusted herself under the wheel and spread out in ample proportions. Our juxtaposition was too intimate to be ignored, and I ventured a wisecrack.

"I'm told, Miss Samuels, that it's best for a woman to drive when it comes to these small Austins."

"Why is that?" she innocently inquired.

"Because with a man at the wheel," I solemnly replied, "his woman companion is forced to slap his face every time he shifts gears. That is, if she's a lady."

Miss Samuels roared delightedly, and we were off to a merry afternoon, ending with tea at her little home with her aged mother.

All Miss Samuels had told us in Atlanta turned out to be true as we toured the projects. Her woman managers impressed us with their obvious efficiency. The greatest problem then facing them was preparation for enforcement of the Overcrowding Law, which emphasized that a tenant who causes overcrowding and a landlord who permits it were both guilty. Miss Samuels and her assistants felt that a pretty kettle of fish had been dumped into their laps. But they all agreed the Overcrowding Law was a necessity, and felt they could muddle through its enforcement somehow.

Too soon the time came for us to be off to meet Mr. Costain in Liverpool. Miss Samuels drove us back to where our Ford was parked. We gingerly "decanted" ourselves from Austin to Ford and were on our way.

18 DUTCH HOUSING BEATS DEPRESSION

THE NEXT morning we were off to Manchester. On being shown our room in the Midlands Hotel, we found the bath very British. The size of the tub was about normal for England, being a comfortable six feet in length, but the extent of the exposed piping was what made it a "pipe dream." Writhing like glittering snakes, the labyrinth twisted and turned tortuously to bring hot and cold water to the business end of the tub. Each coiling pipe was silver-plated in magnificent contrast to the multicolored tile floor and richly veined, black-based marble wainscot.

I counted seven separate runs of exposed plumbing. Five were involved with the hot- and cold-water supplies, while the other two were waste pipes. And in addition to the faucets on the taps, which at long last released the water into the tub, there were five more valves on as many pipelines. Not being an engineer, I didn't feel up to measuring the linear feet of pipe, whose serpentine convolutions reminded us of the Laocoön Group in the Vatican. Laura, who has a horror of snakes, took her bath in a hurry.

As usual, John Martin's letter had opened all doors. Leonard Heywood, director of Housing, met us at his office.

His long upper lip, firm mouth, and pugilistic-shaped ears indicated a fighter. Protruding brows and somewhat low hairline accentuated the impression, though as it turned out his manner was friendly and mild.

Heywood told us all about the housing ceremonies of the day before when Manchester had dedicated one of its most extensive slum-clearance areas. It was no ordinary dedication. Both the present Minister of Health, Sir Kingsley Wood, and the former incumbent, Mr. Arthur Greenwood, participated, although they were vigorous political opponents.

"You must go and see the site yourself," Heywood said. "But first off, I do want to tell you of the rare good humor Sir Kingsley and Mr. Greenwood displayed. Housing was their common ground. As the present Minister put it, 'There are no political barriers when the housing of the people is concerned.' " Heywood paused a moment. "Then d'you know what Sir Kingsley did? Straight away he named a new block of two hundred and four flats, 'Greenwood House.' He got off a good one, too. Said something about how happy everyone would be under the Greenwood tree.

"When it came to Greenwood's turn to lay a foundation stone out in the Collyhurst area, he dubbed the block of flats, 'Sir Kingsley Wood House.' Greenwood expressed the hope that the flats would be even better than those named after him. But all of his talk was not so good-humored. When he touched upon what had brought about our slums, he let our forefathers have what for, I can tell you." Heywood grinned. "It's a pity you couldn't have come a day earlier. But you can see it all, anyway, and today you'll miss the push."

As was so frequently the case our guide considered the slums of his city the worst in history. He may well have been right, for De Quincey had said, a hundred and fifty years

before, "No great city could present so repulsive an appearance as Manchester."

Our first stop was at the Collyhurst Clearance, where as far as the eye could see were acres of piles of rubble. These masses of crumbling brick looked at if some giant had slapped down his massive palm to crush the entire area. Dotted over the seventy-seven square blocks of former slums were pyres of infested timbers being burned to rid them of vermin. The lumber was too rotten for use, and the bricks so far gone that they would be crushed to serve as aggregate for concrete in the new flats.

In the afternoon the saturnine, bulbous-nosed, be-derbied Mr. W. Smith, from Mr. Heywood's office, took us to the municipally owned, satellite town of Wythenshawe. The car we rode in was small, and Mr. Smith found it difficult to get in or out without bumping his bowler. But he took it good-naturedly, removing his hat as he ducked through the door to save the derby from being dented.

The partial solution of Manchester's housing problem was attained by building this complete new town. At the time of our visit, the city had completed about eight thousand houses, private companies around eight hundred, and there were fifteen factories in production.

There were many practical innovations. A minor one stood out at the shopping center. The stores were built in a crescent with what at first appeared to be green grass in the parkway between curb and sidewalk. But as Mr. Smith ducked from our car I saw that the entire expanse was concrete, with an integral green pigment, from curb to walk. The effect was pleasing and economical, both in first cost and maintenance.

A few days after our return to the Carlton Hotel in London, Sir Ernest Simon, M.A., former Lord Mayor of

Manchester, called to discuss our visit to his city during his absence. It was he and his wife, Lady Simon, who had contributed the twenty-six acres, valued at about 60,000 pounds, for the central park at Wythenshawe.

It was not out of the ordinary to find such distinguished couples of wealth and standing in the forefront of the British slum-clearance movement, few though their opposite numbers were in the United States. What a vital part of his life this avocation had become was demonstrated when Sir Ernest was later raised by the King, in 1947, from knight to baron, largely because of his slum-clearance achievements. As is customary, he had something to say about the form of his new title and chose to become Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, thus linking slum clearance to his name for all time.

When the day came to show my film at the Housing Centre, I was uneasy about what to say as an introduction. Practically everyone expected to attend was an expert on slum clearance: Sir Raymond Unwin, Barry Parker, John Wrigley, Major Barnes, Captain Amies, W. R. Davidge, Trystan Edwards, their wives, the officials and members of the Housing Centre, and others. What was new, I wondered, that could be told to this distinguished company?

Finally an idea came. Why not relate slum clearance to war? War was uppermost in the minds of all Britishers at the time. And it wasn't needless worry, as it later turned out.

That evening, to break the ice before developing the slum-war idea, I risked a story old in America but, I hoped, new to the British. It seems that a psychiatrist was lecturing to the inmates of an institution for the feeble-minded. His audience paid little attention. So to jolt them back to what he was saying, he suddenly shouted, "Why are we all here? Why are we all here?" His audience stirred in their seats and

one patient rose to his feet. "I'll tell you why we're all here," he haltingly volunteered. "We're all here because we aren't all there."

A few smiles appeared, but apparently I had laid an egg. I tried to explain that we all had at least one thing in common, an interest in slum clearance, and if we hadn't, then we "weren't all there," when there was a loud guffaw from Mr. Barry Parker, who had just caught the point. He rocked back and forth in his seat in the front row until the tears rolled down his cheeks. This delayed explosion set off laughter throughout the audience, but not so loud as to be boisterous. However, it did break the ice jam.

I then recalled to them how the Austrians had held back Bolshevism through such projects as the George Washington Hof and Leopoldau. The audience hadn't seemed to realize before that making jobs by clearing slums and rehousing the poor, instead of making jobs in preparation for war, was using constructive rather than destructive means to solve world-wide unemployment. Their exchange of glances indicated agreement on the idea that if all nations cleared their slums and rehoused their poor there would be no need to go to war to make jobs.

Sir Raymond Unwin was first on his feet after the movie. There had been gratifying widespread applause and not a few calls of "Hear! Hear!"

From the attention promptly given to Sir Raymond, it was plain to see that he was regarded as the dean of housing in Britain, just as his pre-eminence in that field was also recognized in America.

"In proposing a vote of thanks to our friend from the States," Sir Raymond said, "first off I should like to observe that it may not be entirely inappropriate that I should be the one to make such a motion. You see"—here his eyes

twinkled, and he fiddled with his Windsor tie—"I am somewhat familiar with the ways of the country from whence our lecturer comes. Not only with its housing but with its food and drink. For have I not partaken of fried chicken and mint juleps in Georgia? And have I not seen in its building the very housing estate that the great President Roosevelt dedicated before our eyes in the films this evening?

"And such a crowd there was for that dedication! Would that we had similar outpourings here in England for similar occasions. How did you manage it? Is there that much enthusiasm for slum clearance now in America? I seem to recall that you were encountering difficulties when I was last there, Palmer."

"Yes, Sir Raymond," I replied, "we had our difficulties and still do. And as far as the movie is concerned, honesty forces me to confess that there was some politics mixed up in what you saw. The crowd had come from all over Georgia to welcome the President back to his southern home after a rather extended absence. It was Home-Coming Day. The dedication of Techwood was appropriate but incidental. Had it been some other day, and especially some other speaker, there would have been fewer people present."

"Well, be that as it may," Sir Raymond continued, "we here at the Housing Centre have found a new point of view. There are too often the wearisome presentations of our subject by mere repetition of that which we already know. This evening has been different. Not only the spritely, oral introduction of the films by our lecturer, which our esteemed colleague, Mr. Barry Parker, so much enjoyed, but the films themselves as well.

"This new point of view to which I referred, is the tenable, justifiable view that slum clearance and rehousing can, and should, be internationally employed to prevent wars. That is

the thought we shall carry away with us. That is the thought to ponder."

The flight from Croydon to Holland on Friday, July 31, was uneventful. A letter of introduction had already gone forward to Herr Arie Keppler, director of Housing in Amsterdam, from our mutual friend, Coleman Woodbury, of the National Association of Housing Officials in America. He was well prepared when we arrived at his office in the City Hall the next morning. By his side was his young, capable assistant, Ir. L. van Marlen, B.I., who was also anxious to help us in every way possible. Both of them spoke precise English.

"Probably you will wish to hear how housing is in all the Netherlands first, *ja*?" Keppler began. "Then we talk about Amsterdam. Amsterdam is my job, but maybe I know something about the whole country, too. Shall I tell you?"

"Nothing would suit us better," I assured him.

"The background first, so?" Herr Keppler leaned back in his chair. "Well, we Dutchmen knew a long time ago, when King William III ruled, that the government has duties to clear slums. The King appointed a commission; that was in 1853. The next year, when the commission had reported, one of the members of Parliament introduced legislation that formed the basis for our very good Housing Act of 1901. The legislation of 1854 had been defeated. We weren't ready then, but we did know that something had to be done.

"In 1918 we found that our people needed many houses; we had not built fast enough. We also found that many people needed jobs; but we had no work for them. Shipping, our biggest job, was no good. Other countries would not let us ship; they had high tariffs to keep our products out. They would not hire our ships for their own goods, either. What

must we do? Well, we needed houses, and we needed jobs. Why not combine the two? That would not help our shipping. But it would clear slums, and it would make work. We had all the materials to build with inside our own country; we would not have to get them from outside. Anyway, they would not take our goods in exchange. That is why they made so big tariffs after the war.

"We went to work. In 1918 we had 1,380,000 houses. By 1933 we had added 658,000 more. How did we increase our housing by fifty per cent in fifteen years? With government help. We gave private industry subsidy, too. The Dutch people were ready. We had the state control and the state money. If cities would not act, then the Crown would. And it did.

"By 1930 more than twenty per cent of all industrial workers were building-trade workers. You see what building does to employment, *ja*? We made mistakes but we got the housing done. People live better. There is less crime. There is less sickness. And while Germany and Italy made work by preparing for war, we made work by preparing for peace. That is what our little country—we have only eight million people—has done with housing."

"Do politicians bother you much?" I asked.

"Yes, much trouble, much trouble," he emphatically replied. "Any housing department is a storm center of politics. Politics is the greatest weakness of municipal housing. I don't like politics. Only because I am protected by civil service can I sit in the driver's seat." Herr Keppler liked that phrase. He smiled. "If I not sit in the driver's seat, I get out!" He slammed his fist on the desk. Van Marlen was greatly enjoying his chief's agitation. The young assistant's round, pink face flushed with pleasure, and his blue eyes twinkled.

"Do you use women on your staff?" I wondered aloud, hoping to shift to a pleasanter subject. It worked.

"I would not be without them," Herr Keppler declared. "But I can't find enough to fill all my places. You know the Octavia Hill system, of course. That is what we use. But our teaching courses do not produce enough trained women to fill our vacancies."

We visited many projects, but Herr van Marlen saved to the last the truly unique in slum rehousing. This was the project for the unsocial at Asterdord. As we approached, the place looked much like a fort. It was set in the midst of a barren field, and the outer one-story houses formed a solid, all-enclosing wall of what appeared to be paving bricks. Above the huge entrance gate, and set back on the wall-like perimeter, was a combination lookout tower and management office. It formed the only two-story structure and resembled a large artillery emplacement. Even the windows were long slits. But these were not barred as were the ones on the houses below that made the outer wall. While the bars looked like long, horizontal rows of lattice, they had not been fashioned as trellises for flowers. Their stout dual purpose was to keep the tenants in, once they were home, and to keep thieves out. Surely this was too grim. Van Marlen sensed our bewildered revulsion.

"This is our cure for bad tenants," he said grimly. "We did not want to build it, but we thought it would serve a definite need. We were right as you will see."

Reluctantly we entered the massive gates. The few listless humans loitering on the streets were momentarily forgotten as the woman in charge greeted us. Brawny, smiling, bescrubbed, and hatless, a blonde six-footer, she strode forward to extend a hard-working hand for a hearty shake. She didn't

speak English, but that cordial handclasp said more than any words could.

"Shall we go up to the office?" van Marlen inquired. "We can see the whole project from there."

The view swept every street, front and rear. Below us stretched out the six-sided enclosure. Tracing the inside of the periphery was a cobbled street that served the houses forming the outer wall. The remaining units were arranged in three hollow blocks, all converging on the entrance gate. The only spots of earth to be seen were around the few scattered saplings; all else was brick or concrete. Even the little trees, which scarcely topped the low buildings, had metal guards around them as high as human hands could reach. The rear yards were divided by roof-high, solid walls. All were capped with sharp bits of jagged, broken glass embedded in the copings to discourage prowlers. The windows of the houses within the compound were barred in the manner of those in the outer walls. Closer examination showed how the trellis design had been further softened. The lower border of each horizontal grouping was deeply scalloped to break the harsh lines.

Laura and I turned from the window and took seats with van Marlen and his assistant at her desk.

"You said, Herr van Marlen," I reminded him, "that this project has proved to you that such a development serves a useful purpose."

"Yes," he replied. "And let us recall that I also said we did not want to build it. But we were not solving the problem of the bad tenant. We had tried everything else—kindness, discipline, ejection. No good. What we finally decided was that the bad tenant needs educating, and that education must be under rigid control, with those needing it being isolated from those who did not.

"This meant a separate project, so we built Asterdord. There are less than a hundred and forty units here. Others could be added if required. But we have learned that this place is big enough. Please mark that this is enough. We found that something over one hundred dwellings are all that are needed to handle the bad tenants from among the twenty-eight thousand we supervise. That is really very little."

"But how does it work? Do you force the incorrigible to come here?"

"Yes and no," van Marlen said. "We do not make them come here. But we do force them to leave good housing when they repeatedly throw too many beer bottles through the windows, steal from others, and keep on making trouble. After patience fails, we eject them. Then they try living in the gutter. When they find nowhere to turn but to us, they come back and promise to be good. We say, 'No, you have promised before. You upset the other tenants. We will not have you.' Then they cry and swear to reform. They tell us to have pity on their children. Just please take them in once more, and they will show us that they will not be bad again. But not until they volunteer to be good, do we place them in Asterdord. So you see, they come at their own request. And once here, the education and discipline begin.

"The gates close at nine o'clock. Anyone who is late sleeps in the street that night. All sorts of unfortunates are housed. Some are mendicants. Others are peddlers. For them we have stalls where they can lock up their pushcarts to protect their meager stocks from thieves. Every dwelling has a kitchen-living room, w.c., and bedrooms. There are no frills; everything is basic. One central set of baths and one laundry serve all. Furniture is built in to prevent breakage."

"How are rents fixed and dwellings assigned?"

"Assignments are according to family size. We are most

interested in the children and try to have the house large enough for them to sleep away from their parents. Often the old people are too far gone to be helped, but the children, no. Rents are at a flat rate. That is our policy in all projects. But here the rent is much lower than in other places; as little as three florins [sixty cents] for a two-bedroom house. And often even that is supplied by charitable organizations."

I asked about making pictures. Consent was readily given, and I set my camera. Word spread of what was taking place. Ragged children appeared, but there were no smiles or shouts of laughter. A few of them wore wooden shoes but most were barefoot. Nearby, a man with an evil leer sat on an upturned bucket at his doorstep, feet wide apart, peeling potatoes.

Down the street came another man, legs off below the knees. As he torturously waddled closer, we could see the clods on which he crept, his swinging hands but a few inches from the ground. In an aside I asked van Marlen if it would be all right to take such pictures. He thought they would like it, so I began a slow movie panorama of them all. The potato peeler's leer changed to a broad grin; the cap of the footless man came off his head with a jaunty sweep; and the children massed wherever the camera pointed, a hesitant smile breaking through their solemn faces here and there.

Very little was said as Laura and I drove back to the hotel. We had been given too much to think about. Sunday afternoon we left for The Hague, where there was also a project for the unsocial, and asked to see it first. In a densely populated district, we found it to be much like a prison. It seemed to lack the firm but understanding management of Asterdord. We refrained from expressing the bewilderment we felt about the projects for the unsocial. To have the only two we knew of in the world situated in prim, trim Holland puzzled us even more.

Discussing this enigma on our flight back to London on August 3, we concluded that the unsocial projects stemmed from Dutch realism. Compassionately practical, they took action, in solving the problem of the incorrigible tenant, that was certainly forthright. And that same characteristic had resulted in the most important thing we had learned in Holland—that housing can beat depressions.

19 BANDBOXES AND FATHER PENN

WE SAILED for Quebec on August 8, 1936, and drove to Atlanta, anxious to catch up on the progress made in our own slum clearance.

Rents had been straightened out during our absence. They were at last fixed low enough so that the former slum dwellers of the Tanyard Creek area could afford to pay them, and they began moving into the new homes of Techwood. The formal dedication was not unlike that at Brightwells in London except that we had no H.R.H., Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, present. But the first lady of our land, Mrs. Roosevelt, had graciously arranged so that her participation would not end with the day. From the home of the President at Hyde Park she gave a rosebush to the Hyde Park group of the Boy Scouts of America, who delivered it by airplane to their fellow Boy Scouts in Atlanta. At the conclusion of the speeches on Techwood Day, the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts of Atlanta together embedded the Hyde Park rosebush in the former slum soil there to bloom where flowers never bloomed before.

Mayor James L. Key issued an Official Proclamation that:

"WHEREAS, the construction of Techwood Homes has eliminated from this city eleven blocks of slum area . . . re-

moval of these slum conditions has contributed to improving the health of our citizens . . . has reduced the fire hazard . . . has provided honest employment of useful labor . . .

"WHEREAS, . . . the City of Atlanta is leading our nation in this new field of social justice for our citizens . . .

"THEREFORE, I, . . . proclaim Tuesday, September 1st, 1936 . . . as Techwood Day. . . ."

Dr. Brittain presided at the ceremonies, and Colonel Hackett, now U.S. Administrator of Housing, was in rare form. The going had been really rough. This affair was a bench mark in the history of housing, and he made the most of it. First he plugged for a new housing law to replace the temporary make-work legislation that had resulted in Techwood.

"I have sufficient faith in the progress of America to believe that this is just a beginning," he said. "Senator Wagner introduced at the last session of Congress a bill which is designed to perpetuate the public housing movement. This bill was acclaimed by every class in America. It undoubtedly will be presented again at the next session of Congress. Enactment of this bill and a continuation of slum clearance and low-rent housing call for progressive and realistic leadership. It cannot be done if we are content to await the passing of miracles now promised in some quarters, or if we believe that words can serve as well as bricks."

The Colonel's reference to "miracles" had the opposition in mind, for he went on, "Completed in an election year, Techwood Homes is being criticized by certain elements for political effect—that it is not self-liquidating and rents not high enough. Although I worked for months on the problem, I was never able to figure out how housing can be amortized out of the revenue from people who can't pay rent. Yet per-

haps the gentlemen who criticize could perform such miracles themselves."

High and low, rich and poor, young and old made up the audience, which spread over the grass-covered terrace below the speakers' platform. The one hundred and sixteen families that had moved into Techwood since August 15 were there en masse, their muddy alleys left behind forever.

With Techwood a going concern, I kept pegging away to make the public slum-clearance conscious. In November, Laura and I again hit the trail. The first stop was in Boston for illustrated talks to the Boston Building Congress and the Harvard Business School in Cambridge.

From Boston we hopped up to Dartmouth for a talk and the movie, then headed for New York. On November 19 the medicine-man show was before the New York Building Congress. Next I spoke at Princeton. We ended the swing around the circle convinced that undergraduates were more alert to the slum problem, and more determined to do something about it, than the old grads or the businessmen.

In early December, I went to the annual meeting of the National Association of Housing Officials in Philadelphia. A large group of us toured the "bandboxes" of the city. Spawned when the Industrial Revolution reached America in 1854, they solidly covered the interior of blocks in the working-class district. When labor was needed to tend the ever-increasing machines, the owners of the hollow square blocks of hovels—which in 1854 were already teeming with humanity—erected these three-story "bandboxes" within the hollow squares. Then they cut thirty-inch-wide "tunnels" through the outer housing to enable the dwellers to reach their "bandbox" homes.

Twelve feet square and three stories high, the only windows fronted on the narrow walking space between the "band-

boxes" and the outer houses on the street. There were no openings on the sides or rear because of the juxtaposition of other "bandboxes." The first floor of each house was designed for cooking, the second as living quarters, and the third for sleeping. This upper floor was often only four-and-a-half feet high. There was no need for a loftier ceiling, the owners explained, since the sleepers lay there prone and it wasn't necessary to stand up. Outdoor privies were jointly shared by many families, and water was carried from the nearest common hydrant. One joker—if it may be so called—was that a separate family usually occupied each of the three floors. In this and similar housing, 60,000 people lived in Philadelphia in 1936.

Such a depressing record in modern times did not improve the past reputation of Philadelphians for apathy toward slums. Back in 1880 there were so many foul privy vaults within the city—about which the owners would do nothing—that the Board of Health was forced to act and ordered all such health hazards replaced with more sanitary facilities. The slum owners carried the case to the Supreme Court.

"The cause of the nuisance," the court ruled, "was not the privy vault itself, but its contents. The mere hole in the ground was not a nuisance. When, therefore, the well was cleaned and purified, the cause of the nuisance was removed. It is true, it might become a nuisance again. In such an event, it would require to be again cleansed. The order requiring the owners to put in waterclosets, if sustained by this court, might be far-reaching in its consequences, and lead to serious and obnoxious abuses."

Thus for the legalistic-minded reason that the owner, per se, did not create the nuisance—although the insanitary facilities that he rented out caused the tenant to commit the nuisance—the court overruled the Board of Health. Conse-

quently, in 1934, fifty-four years after that ruling, there were still four thousand privy vaults officially reported in the City of Brotherly Love.

On my last evening there, the lack of interest of the good people of Philadelphia in clearing their slums was brought to me with equal force but greater contrast. The train for Boston, where I was to talk with Professor Felix Frankfurter, did not leave until midnight, and restless from what I had seen of the "bandboxes," I paced the quiet city streets.

Reaching the imposing City Hall, where Father Penn stood proudly aloft over the great city he had founded, I glimpsed a light among the flowers of the interior gardens. Coming closer, I saw an illuminated diorama in a glass case set on a table. It colorfully depicted an open-air zoo that was built to scale and complete with animals, caves, trees, and all. Attached was a notice proclaiming that 400,000 citizens of Philadelphia had signed a petition to rehouse the animals of the city's zoo.

As I stood there, stunned at the contrast of effort in housing animals and people, a shabbily dressed, aged woman shuffled to my side. We looked at the zoo exhibit together, and neither of us spoke for a moment.

"What do you think of it?" I finally inquired.

"Think of what? Rehousing the zoo?" she piped in a querulous tone of voice. "Why, it would be a fine thing, I suppose. I like animals, I do."

"So do I," I assured her. "But have you ever seen the 'bandboxes'?"

"You bet I have!" she exclaimed with a scowl. "The 'bandboxes' are terrible. They're simply awful!"

"Well," I suggested, "don't you think it would be much better to rehouse the poor people who live in the 'bandboxes' first, and take care of the animals at the zoo a little later on?"

"Yes, indeed." She nodded vigorously as she digested the idea. "I never thought of that before, but it would be grand!"

The purpose of my visit to Professor Felix Frankfurter in Cambridge was to enlist his help with President Roosevelt. Not that the President was unaware of the need to clear slums. I well knew of his deep interest in the matter. But my feeling was that a viewing of the films might prompt the President to give housing top priority. Then slum clearance would become a continuing national policy instead of merely an emergency measure to make jobs.

Harry Hopkins could not—or at least did not—arrange for a film showing. Neither had anything come from calling on Marvin McIntyre at Warm Springs and exhibiting the pictures to Henry Kanee there.

In seeking another approach to the President, I noticed that the newspapers had been mentioning the frequency of Professor Frankfurter's visits to the White House. William A. Sutherland, who had studied under Professor Frankfurter at Harvard Law School, was a mutual friend. When I put the matter up to Bill, he arranged the meeting with Frankfurter for December 6, 1936, at Cambridge.

A courteous maid took me to Professor Frankfurter's living room when I turned up at his comfortable, unpretentious home that Sunday morning. There was little that was distinctive in the furnishings, and that little was forgotten when Frankfurter entered. The mere presence of the little man so drew me to him that he was all I saw or thought about. Twinkling, intense, the pince-nez'd blue eyes in the massive head alternated between quick, all-inclusive friendly understanding and impatience to get on with things. Never before—with the exception of the President—had I met a man who could keep so far ahead of your unexpressed thoughts. Mid-

way in a sentence, Professor Frankfurter would nod or make a pertinent comment on what I was about to say. Not to interrupt, but simply to save time. Physically small, mentally a giant, it was no wonder that this patriot was always welcome at the White House.

"The really best way," Professor Frankfurter said after I had explained my problem, "would be for you to stay at the White House for several days. Then at odd moments, when you caught the President, you could unburden yourself of the whole story." Frankfurter's finger tips were meeting; he was apparently speaking from personal experience. "No one who has not seen quite a bit of the President lately can possibly realize how impossible it is for him to give much consecutive attention to a single problem. There are far too many of them. But none more important than slum clearance, I agree.

"You say you have talked with Ben Cohen and Tom Corcoran but didn't get very far. Well, they are up against much the same problem for time. But let me have a talk with them. I'll be in Washington within the next few weeks. Then I'll write you what I find out."

Professor Frankfurter was still for a long, full minute as his keen eyes looked me up and down.

"Keep on with what you are doing," he urged. "Once a housing program gets under way, we shall get somewhere. You'll hear from me soon."

Back home again in Atlanta—at least for the moment—I was invited to a "big meeting" of the Washington Memorial Library Forum of Macon. That city needed its slums cleared, and I said I'd help. Laura and I drove down and, while not expecting an audience of seven hundred as at the Harvard Club in New York, we figured there would be a sizable crowd.

However, the attendance totaled just seven people. While bad weather was blamed for the poor showing, I found that there had been practically no advance notice.

The seven people in the audience who had braved the elements were already proponents. Laura and I were learning the hard way. We had made a water haul, and there were no converts to the cause.

Into this discouragement came more bad news. A letter from Professor Frankfurter said, "I should have written you earlier, but I was awaiting opportunities for personal talk before writing. It is perfectly clear to me that Messrs. Cohen and Corcoran have so many other commitments that their minds simply cannot turn effectively to your problems."

Well, that was that! Some other approach to the President would have to be found. After all, it was he who could—and would, I believed—do the most to put housing on the track once he came to understand its urgency.

On February 13, 1937, a letter came from "Ernie" Bohn, president of the National Association of Housing Officials, that a group would meet on the nineteenth in Washington to revise housing legislation previously proposed.

My optimism mounted on reading a preliminary draft. There was ample provision for both federal and local subsidies so that the rents would be low enough for people from the slums to afford. The scheme was not unlike that used in England.

Senator Wagner introduced the bill. My main fear was that the proponents of the act did not appreciate the terrific amount of selling the Congress still needed.

March 5 was a red-letter day in Atlanta, especially to those interested in slum clearance. With less than three hours between trains, Mrs. Roosevelt spent most of her limited time at Techwood and University Homes.

Major Clark Howell, Jr., publisher of the *Atlanta Constitution,* had succeeded to his father's interest in housing on the death of Mr. Howell, Sr., on November 14, 1936. Consequently, Clark was quietly notified that Mrs. Roosevelt and her secretary, Miss Malvina Thompson, might be interested in seeing our slum-clearance projects during an unannounced stopover in Atlanta.

Dr. Brittain, Major Howell, Ralph McGill, of *The Constitution,* and I met them at the station and immediately headed for Techwood. I drove, and Mrs. Roosevelt sat beside me.

"I so well remember the day Franklin dedicated Techwood," she breezily reminisced. "It was his kind of day, sunny and cheery. He was immensely pleased, and so was I."

As soon as we arrived, the word spread quickly that the First Lady was visiting Techwood, and in no time at all she was surrounded by admiring children. Mrs. Roosevelt slowed her swinging stride so the little tots could keep up, and as a thought puzzled her, a frown came on her usually smiling face.

"Tell me more about the playgrounds," she prompted. "These smaller children don't have to compete with the larger ones, do they?"

She showed pleasure in learning that children under six years of age had separate play areas, well fenced and with sand piles.

The stride lengthened as Mrs. Roosevelt got back into high again. How about the laundries? We inspected those. And what about the apartments themselves? Not an occupied one as she hated to disturb any housewife. There was a typical unit still vacant on the second floor. You could sense that if Mrs. Roosevelt had her way she would have taken the steps two at a time.

Soon we were off to University Homes, which was already partly occupied. This is how Ralph McGill told the story in *The Constitution.*

"At the colored housing project, two young girls stood on the walk peering toward the door through which Mrs. Roosevelt and her party had gone.

" 'Tis,' said one.

" 'Tain't,' said the other.

" 'Tis so. I done seen her in the movies.'

" 'Tain't no such. There ain't no police. Whyfor there ain't no police if 'ats Mrs. Roosevelt?'

" 'Whyfor police? You think she gwine bring all her money along down here? Is you crazy?'

"By this time a crowd had gathered.

" 'Is 'at Mrs. Roosevelt?' the first girl inquired.

" 'Yes, it's Mrs. Roosevelt,' someone replied.

" 'Fo' God! Lemme out of here!'

"And so she ran yelling, 'Mommer, Mommer, come a-runnin'! It's Mrs. Roosevelt, sho 'nuf. Honest, Mommer. I ain't lyin', honest!'

"And so it went. A crowd gathered quickly as this woman, one of the most intelligent and courageous in America and in the world, saw what progress had been made toward social betterment for the masses of the people."

Miss Florence Read, president of Spelman College, which adjoined the former Beavers' Slide, that worst of all slums, now replaced by University Homes, and Mr. Alonzo Moron, the housing manager, acted as guides. Mrs. Roosevelt turned to Miss Reid as we toured the buildings.

"You know," she said thoughtfully, "I believe it is as important, maybe more important, for a housewife to know how her servant lives as for an industrialist to know how his workers live. The average head of a house takes it for granted

that servants live in good places, but many don't. They live in insanitary quarters, which results in their bringing into the homes of well-to-do families epidemics and disease. For that reason, if not for the humanitarian basis, certainly for self-interest, everyone should clean up slums."

Before we returned her to the train, Mrs. Roosevelt visited the jail, which had been completed with WPA funds. She even went into the women's cell block and talked with the wrecks from the streets.

Leon Keyserling, who had worked on the preliminary draft, telegraphed to suggest that I testify on the new housing bill in Washington on April 15, 1937.

Senator Walsh presided at the hearing and was in the chair when Mayor LaGuardia testified. We were all seated at a large table with a vacant space on either side of New York City's fiery mayor. In his enthusiasm, he would occasionally slip from his chair and sidle back and forth along the table, pounding his fist and gesticulating. He was so short in stature that, whether seated or standing, there was no apparent difference in his height.

It was a three-ring circus. Senator Walsh continually interrupted with irrelevancies. The Right Honourable Herbert Stanley Morrison, Member of Parliament and Leader of the London County Council, testified by invitation. But while he was attempting to detail the British experience, Senator Walsh broke in so often that Morrison never did tell his story. He did, however, get in one telling statement.

"Legislation for housing of the working population of England," he pointed out, "has existed since 1890. It has been a commonplace part of British public affairs. It is now accepted by all British political parties that the slums are a disgrace, overcrowding is a disgrace, and it is the duty of

the Government and Great Britain to get rid of them as quickly as they can."

During my session on the stand, Senator Walsh broke in frequently.

"The slums," he blandly stated, "are usually owned unfortunately by poor people who have to live in them themselves, who have two or three tenements, or have two or three houses and rent them."

The Senator did not trouble to explain why he classified such slum owners, receiving extortionate rents, as poor people.

As others who testified stressed the social angle, my argument was directed along economic lines.

There was more, much more. But the thinking in Congress was still confused. What was needed beyond anything else was positive word and aggressive action from the White House.

20 WHITE HOUSE— VIA MRS. ROOSEVELT

THREE YEARS of plugging without success to reach the President with the slum-clearance story had emphasized the need for his personal attention. Hopkins, Wallace, Wagner, Frankfurter, McIntyre—none had opened the door to the White House. But positive word and aggressive action by President Roosevelt had now become imperative, or another housing bill would fail to pass. Without the President's help it would be the same old story again.

Once I had felt that he might temporize with big issues. That was when he spoke in Atlanta on May 22, 1932, during his first campaign for the Presidency.

"The country needs and, unless I mistake its temper, the country demands," he had said, "bold, persistent experimentation. It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all try something. The millions who are in want will not stand by silently forever while the things to satisfy their needs are within easy reach."

Sitting only a few feet from Roosevelt when he made that statement, I mistakenly judged it to be cheap, political claptrap. "If elected I don't know what I'm going to do, but I'll do something" was the way his thinking sounded to me. I

had found him a charming man socially at that 'possum supper back in 1930, but such a public statement as "above all try something" and then not to name the "something" decided me to vote for Hoover.

Luckily Roosevelt didn't need my vote—we laughed about it together in later years. Nor, as I had incorrectly guessed, was he uncertain about what to do. He knew his course but wisely avoided specific details in advance of election. His forthright action with the banks in March, 1933, proved that he was a doer, and also proved how badly I had misjudged him. From then on I became his devoted follower.

Now if he would only be as decisive with the slums in 1937 as he had been with the banks in 1933! The issue must be shown to him clearly and concisely. He would have to see it in capsule form.

"See it" was exactly what I wanted, and the movies would do it. As Jacob Riis had put it in *The Making of an American,* "I wrote but my words seemed to make no impression—until my negatives, still dripping from the darkroom, came to reinforce them. From them there was no appeal."

In addition to all the others, I had also been working through Mrs. Roosevelt. In January, 1937, she had said that I might send her the movies on the chance she could fit them into the President's schedule somehow.

Not until May did word come that the first lady would see me on the seventeenth at twelve noon. Prompt to the second, Mrs. Roosevelt met me in the red reception room of the White House, indicated that I was to sit beside her on the settee across from the fireplace, and turned her better ear my way.

"Now," she said, "please tell me how I can help."

Her mind raced ahead of mine as I recounted my many attempts to reach the President through others, and brought

her up to date on how the slum-clearance legislation had bogged down. She seemed to catch the now-or-never spirit, rose abruptly, and asking me to wait a moment, left the room.

"It's all arranged," she said radiantly when she returned. "Come for dinner tonight. You shall show your films to the President afterward. I still have your reels, and our film operator will do all that is necessary, so don't worry."

She seemed as happy as I—well, almost—that the President would now "see" the need for action.

There were six guests for dinner in the family dining room that evening. The President was already seated as we entered, and Mrs. Roosvelt asked me to sit at his left. "Then you can talk housing to your heart's content." Mrs. Henry Morgenthau was on his right.

In a high-backed chair, duplicating the President's and across the center of the oval table from him, sat Mrs. Roosevelt. At her right was Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, and at her left Franklin Pierce Adams, newspaper columnist. Mrs. Adams was between Secretary Morgenthau and me. Edward L. Roddan, assistant to Charles Michelson in handling publicity and various other chores for the Democratic Party, sat between Mrs. Morgenthau and Mr. Adams.

No sooner did the soup appear than Mrs. Roosevelt suggested that I start talking slum clearance. While waiting for a lead, I had been doing what came naturally, crumbling toast in my soup. With attention directed my way by Mrs. Roosevelt's remark, I realized my subconscious *faux pas,* and noted with relief that the President had already beaten me in crumbling his toast in his soup. But before I could wind up on the need to clear slums, Secretary Morgenthau broke into the conversation.

"Aha!" he exclaimed. "I see you are after my gold."

The President chuckled at such a frontal attack by the watchdog of the Treasury, so I countered by avoiding slums for the moment and sticking to the subject of gold.

"I wonder if you would tell me, Mr. President," I asked, "if the story about Gene Black of Atlanta making a pass at the gold service here in the White House has any truth in it?"

"What story is that?" he inquired.

I then repeated how it was reported that Eugene Black dined at the White House the night the President had instructed Mr. Black, in his capacity as governor of the Federal Reserve Board, to sequester all gold for the Government. As a good soldier, though reluctantly, Mr. Black had followed orders.

It seems that when Mr. Black sat down in the State Dining Room that evening, he found that the gold service was being used.

"You know," Secretary Morgenthau interrupted at this point, "those pieces are not solid gold. They are merely plate."

"You mean 'washed gold,' Henry," the President wisecracked.

After that exchange, I continued with my story. No sooner, I said, did Governor Black note the gold service than he slyly slipped a fork into his trousers pocket. An attentive butler immediately brought another, and this went the way of the first one. Noticing the obvious pilfering, the Governor's dinner partner became uneasy.

"Why, Governor Black," she exclaimed, "whatever are you doing?"

The commotion attracted the President's attention. From his place a few seats away he leaned forward, not wanting to miss the clowning he knew his friend Gene was up to.

Solemnly the Governor turned from his table companion and pointed at the President, who was now all eyes and ears.

"You see that man," Governor Black said accusingly. "He took my gold. Well, now I'm taking his!"

When I finished, the President laughed heartily with the others around the table.

During the ensuing conversation, the President recalled an unfortunate remark that he had made at the 'possum supper of 1930. Then governor of New York, and generally recognized as a potential candidate for the Presidency, he had publicly referred to New York City as "a sink of iniquity." It happened near the end of the evening, which had been a merry one. Ostensibly politics was taboo. But as toastmaster I could not completely ignore politics while reading out such telegrams as "IF HE [Roosevelt] CONTINUES IN THE REAL JEFFERSONIAN PRINCIPLES—HE MAY MAKE THE REPUBLICAN 'COON COME DOWN IN 1932," from Bernard M. Baruch.

Then followed some horseplay, which always delighted Roosevelt. We had been talking about the Creek Indians and Iroquois fraternizing at Warm Springs in the early 1800's, just as war whoops split the air when two of our number dressed as braves burst in and scalped a guest who, by prearrangement, was wearing a wig on his bald head.

However, the final incident that led directly to Roosevelt's "iniquity" remark came just before he rose for an informal address. It was then my pleasant duty to present to him a large drawing by Lewis Gregg, famed cartoonist of *The Atlanta Constitution.*

I solemnly claimed that our group originated during feasts in the days of old Rome and had combined centuries ago with the gypsies and the Creek Indians. Consequently, our members still had the power to foretell the future. As

proof we would now reveal how our distinguished guest might soon be appearing before his fellow countrymen. We would even show him following in the footsteps of the Father of Our Country, George Washington.

By then everyone felt sure the unveiling of Gregg's drawing would tie into the Presidency, but as the picture was unveiled, there was the Governor of New York cutting down a persimmon tree in which old Br'er 'Possum had been cornered—cutting down a persimmon tree instead of a cherry tree!

This amusing turn caused Roosevelt to open with, "This is the kind of party that really goes to my heart. If we could cut out the banquets in that great sink of iniquity called New York, I'd be happy."

The wire services had their representatives at the 'possum supper in force, and they promptly reported the "sink of iniquity" remark. This gave those in the East who opposed the nomination of Governor Roosevelt for the Presidency a chance to try to distort his humorous comment.

When Basil O'Connor, Roosevelt's law partner, saw the first editions of the morning papers up East, he phoned Roosevelt to urge that he get the matter straightened out immediately, or an issue would be raised comparable to the "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" charge flung at the Democratic Party by Blaine's supporters during the Cleveland-Blaine campaign in 1884, only to backfire on Blaine.

Governor Roosevelt promptly called the Associated Press in Atlanta and requested that I be told of his predicament and asked to help. A reporter caught me on the phone at home, and I dictated a new release. The A.P. manager obligingly killed the first version. The new one was to the effect that Governor Roosevelt was using the phrase of others unacquainted with the great city and, of course, did not him-

self mean to say that was his idea. Fortunately, the distortion of the incident did not spread.

The foregoing is significant historically but has become of more than passing interest to me. As I look back at it, what Roosevelt then said about New York was not just a slip of the tongue. It seems to me that in his mind there was always a subconscious picture of swarming slums when he thought of New York. While he did not consider the metropolis itself a "sink of iniquity," he did know that such a description suited much of its area.

The President, it appeared, was still somewhat uneasy about what may have been the consequences of his indiscreet remark. I hated to think what might have happened to our country, and slum clearance in particular, if Roosevelt had not won the election.

At the end of the dinner, we all went to the upper living room, where a movie projector was already set up and an operator at hand.

Portable chairs were in place, and the President beckoned me to one at his side. Not once did his eyes leave the screen as *The World War against Slums* told its graphic story of the constant battles to cure the cancers of town and country alike in Italy, Austria, Poland, Russia, Germany, Holland, Great Britain, and America.

"No wonder you were impressed," he said to me, keeping his eyes on the movie, "with what Italy has done. I had no idea they had cleaned up so much of Naples and had tackled such an immense reclamation job in the Pontine Marshes." After a thoughtful pause, he spoke again. "I always said that slum clearance kept Austria from Communism, but I never saw these big projects before. No wonder they pleased the people."

Then there was a long silence as the President studied the movies, until we reached the section on Holland where a close-up of an elderly woman in the housing for the aged appeared on the screen. Her heavy jowls and deeply lined face tempted me to observe that she wouldn't take a prize in a beauty contest.

"Tut, tut!" the President snapped with family pride, "she has a good, honest Dutch face!"

At the end of the film, Secretary Morgenthau, backed up by his wife, dwelt at some length on the horrors of the alley slums right there in Washington. With Mrs. Roosevelt, Mrs. Morgenthau had been active in Washington slum-clearance work.

"Yes, I know they are right at our door," the President admitted. "You know, the next message I send to those ninety-six senators on the Hill is going to be in movies. That will *really* get results."

Both the President and the Secretary agreed that there was no further need to convince them. They were solidly sold on slum clearance. The trouble was no longer "at this end of the Avenue," as the President put it, but at the other end, that is, the Senate and the House of Representatives.

"But where is the money coming from to expand this program?" The President glanced at Morgenthau, who in turn looked at me.

"Well, there is one source," I replied. "That is through a graduated tax such as you saw mentioned in the Austrian project. You may recall it said that the tenants of the eighty-six largest de luxe apartments in Vienna paid as much rent tax as 350,000 workmen. In our country the residents of such neighborhoods as Park Avenue could afford to chip in. In fact, one penthouse dweller there told me he would be all for it. Incidentally, the only thing in the New Deal this

Bourbon was for was slum clearance, and he accepted a graduated rent tax as a sensible way to get the money!"

"That's a new one on me," the President commented.

Secretary Morgenthau said he hadn't heard about it, either, but it might have possibilities.

I then explained that a graduated rent tax based on ability to pay, and averaging 5 per cent of America's $3,500,000,000 residential rent roll, would produce enough annual subsidy to house three million families.

All paid strict attention, especially the President. The silence as he turned over the idea of a rent tax in his mind was broken by Mrs. Roosevelt.

"Mr. Palmer," she suggested, "please tell the President about that FHA project in Atlanta."

I was at a loss to understand what she meant until she explained that she was referring to Oak Knoll. An amazing woman, she even remembered, in addition to Techwood and University Homes, the little subdivision where my brother-in-law, Richard Sawtell, and I were building houses of living room, dining room, kitchen, and two bedrooms to sell for $3,250. The payments of $25.50 a month included taxes and insurance under the Government's FHA program.

The President quickly commented that payments were about five dollars per room per month for purchase, or materially less than most rents at that time. He was delighted that private enterprise could provide good homes at moderate rentals and wanted to know more. Would the Government's help in slum clearance interfere with such private projects? I then brought out that the public-housing program in Great Britain had helped materially to expand the operations of the Building Societies there while, without public housing as a pace setter, the operations of private outfits in

America had contracted, despite the help our Government gave through FHA.

While the movie operator was getting his apparatus out of the way, the President told me to get in touch with Secretary McIntyre first thing the next morning. In the meantime he, the President, would figure out what the next step should be. He said that he was now determined to break the log jam in the Wagner bill, and he guessed that the best way would be for me to work with Secretary Morgenthau. But he wasn't quite sure. He would think it through that night and leave a message for me with "Mac" in the morning.

Early the next morning, May 18, I was with Secretary McIntyre at the White House. Yes, "the Boss" had already instructed him to make appointments for me with anyone I thought might help. I mentioned Secretary Morgenthau, and "Mac" said he'd fix it up.

No sooner said than done. In no time at all I found myself in the Secretary's office at the Treasury Building. He called in his administrative assistant, William H. McReynolds, to handle the details. Now who did I think could work out the kinks in the proposed housing law so Congress would pass it? Would I do it myself? But it seemed to me better for someone resident in Washington, and an official of the Government who had not taken sides, to handle the assignment. Or, I suggested, maybe one individual primarily identified with public housing, and another with private enterprise, could collaborate. How about John Ihlder, of the Washington Alley Dwelling Authority, and Matt Daiger, of the Federal Reserve? Both were capable and knew their way around. And both were soon hard at work.

On June 14, Daiger wrote that Wagner had been away and "My understanding is that he has not had any conferences on the Wagner Bill." The next day Ihlder wrote, "As

nearly as I can state it, the situation is this. All parties concerned seem to be in an attitude of mind which would make them hospitable to suggestions tending toward a reconciliation of points of view. The difficulty, however, seems to be as to who shall take the first step. It is possible that you are the one who could bring it about."

Back and forth went the negotiations between Atlanta and Washington, and so did I. Major differences were ironed out with members of Congress.

As usual, the President knew what he was doing. The movie had helped enough with him and Morgenthau to stimulate their action, working with Congressmen in their own way, and helping us housers work in ours. August saw final action by both Houses of Congress, and the President signed the United States Housing Act of 1937 on September 1 of that year.

21 MORE THAN SHERMAN BURNED

AMERICAN THINKING, not unlike that of Kagawa, came to me in August, 1937, from our oldest daughter, Margaret. In her early teens, she had been greatly impressed by "Prayer," a poem of Louis Untermeyer's she had come across while at camp in North Carolina, and sent home to us.

> "Open my ears to music; let
> Me thrill to Spring's first
> flutes and drums—
> But never let me dare forget
> The bitter ballads of the slums." *

On September 15, a telegram came from Secretary of the Interior Ickes for a Washington conference on the twentieth. Now maybe there would be happier refrains than the "bitter ballads" that had so sorely troubled our daughter.

At the meeting, after asking for advice and help from those present, Ickes concluded by saying, "I can't see that we are going to get very far in building up the right kind of a civilization without low-cost housing, without giving the

* Louis Untermeyer, "Prayer," *Modern American Poetry* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.).

people decent homes in which to live, and in which they can afford to live."

On the whole, the conference served a useful purpose. Many were heard while Ickes and his aides listened attentively.

Through the leadership of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, the City Council had followed up its resolution of March 15, 1937, urging passage of the Wagner Bill, with a further resolution to establish a Housing Authority of five members. At the time Mayor Hartsfield approved the petition of the City Council to the National Congress, I mistakenly thought we might at last get some housing leadership from him. But when it came to local action, he dragged his feet until he felt sure that at least 150 per cent of the voters wanted him to do something. On September 24, the Mayor vetoed the move to set up a local body. His comment was that "Atlanta is not going to be a guinea pig in this matter."

This meant that we would have to arouse even wider and more vocal citizen interest. We would have to prove to the Mayor where the votes were.

Ever since I had been a boyhood guest for several days of Edsel Ford and his parents in their Highland Park home, he and I had kept in touch with each other. In recent years I had piqued his curiosity about slum clearance. I wanted the influence and foresight he and his father could bring to the movement. In 1935 I had sent Edsel clippings and transcripts of some of my lectures.

"Back in 1912," I wrote in my letter of transmittal," you and your father told me that the automobile and good roads would be the main sources of employment for our people during the next twenty years. You were foresighted then, and now I wonder if you have grasped, with equal celerity, the full significance of the slum-clearance movement?"

More housing information was sent to Edsel from England in July of that year, right after Sir Theodore Chambers had suggested that the Fords could do a great good to the world by building a model city. I had seen the Fords' Dagenham Plant near Becontree, England. The size of that plant proved that a new city for America was not beyond the capacity of the Fords to conceive or to build. Its magnitude recalled the breadth of Henry Ford's thinking. He had shared his thoughts with Edsel and me; though we were still in high school, he had treated us like men. I particularly remembered one breakfast when Mr. Ford wanted to reminisce. Office hours never mattered to Henry Ford. He sprawled in his chair while his wife sat erect; he for comfort, not lazily, she naturally, not in pretended dignity. Mrs. Ford's sweet smile and quiet pride in husband and son went together.

Although it had not yet been made public, Henry Ford told us at that breakfast of his plan for a minimum wage of five dollars a day. That was a breath-taking announcement and it rocked our nation's industrial leaders.

I also remember Mr. Ford telling us reflectively that he'd had such a close call while night superintendent of the Edison Company in Detroit that the Ford automobile might never have been built. The man who relieved Mr. Ford at the power plant early each day had caught barber's itch, which made his face so tender that he could not shave himself. So Mr. Ford became a barber, pro tem. Tilting an old kitchen chair against the brick wall of the engine room to give the amateur razor wielder better light, Mr. Ford walked back and forth between the chair and an open sink not far away.

One morning, the shave over, the barber and his lone customer had hardly stepped to the sink to wash up when there was a sudden crash and a roar as though Doomsday

had come. The shaft of the fly-wheel of a two-story-high reciprocating engine had snapped and as the wheel smashed through the brick wall of the building, tons of steel crushed the "barber chair" into kindling wood. A few seconds earlier and that would have been the end of Henry Ford, and America might not have taken to wheels so fast.

I had hoped father and son would put slum clearance on wheels in 1938. They did a few apartments, but the big job, a whole city, never caught on.

The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce brought Captain Richard L. Reiss, noted British housing authority, to Atlanta for a large civic luncheon on February 18, 1938. His remarks were of some help in our drive to make the Atlanta City Council "see the light."

"Public housing authorities do not interfere wtih private enterprise," Reiss declared, and, "Government-financed public housing saves money in the long run."

That was exactly what Atlantans needed to be reminded of. They had heard it often enough, but locally the same old crowd was still shouting "socialism." It took on a different meaning when refuted by such a leading businessman as Captain Reiss, who had helped to put Welwyn Garden City on the map financially. And with Reginald S. Fleet, well-known investment banker of Atlanta, presiding, no one could claim that the luncheon was a "pink" affair. Especially so as Fleet was acting in his capacity as Chairman of the Housing and Town Planning Committee of the Chamber of Commerce of Atlanta, and doing yeoman service for public housing.

The irony of the position in which Atlanta found herself in March, 1938, came full force to me through what Captain Reiss said about Techwood: "Best public housing in America." The best and the first, as well. Surely my home town

was better prepared than any other city to hold her leadership, now that public housing had been established as national policy.

All Atlanta had to do was set up her Housing Authority. The money was in Washington for the asking. But Mayor Hartsfield's veto of the City Council's resolution had stymied further action. Other southern cities, with funds from Washington, were beehives of activity. Many had gotten their "how-to-do-it" from us. Apparently we didn't practice as well as we preached. In our state of Georgia alone, Savannah, Augusta, Columbus, Macon, and even little Athens, were officially, legally, and effectively going ahead full steam with public housing.

What else could we do to force action from the Mayor? Time and federal funds were running out fast. Persuasion, pleas and pressure had failed to sway Hartsfield. Then fate took a hand.

On Sunday night, March 27, 1938, a batch of wretched slum hovels caught fire, and just across the street Atlanta's famed Grady Hospital came tragically close to being wiped out. It was the greatest threat to the city since the conflagration of 1917. And the citizens remembered that slums were to blame then, too.

When I reached the scene, the sky was red from the leaping flames. Firemen struggled on the roof of the main hospital building to extinguish the huge embers that rained down from the thirty slum shacks, which were burning beyond control. While power lines fell and telephone poles flared, streams of water were being played from the roof of the nurses' home to save adjoining structures. Through the bars of the venereal-disease building where prisoners were treated, anguished faces stared helplessly at the rapidly approaching flames.

All but three of Atlanta's fire companies were on the job, desperately fighting the spreading holocaust. Fire Chief Parker and Police Chief Hornsby directed the work. Mayor Hartsfield was there, too. He saw desperately ill patients being caried from the hospital buildings on stretchers. He saw flaming torches shoot into the sky and fall into the central business area. He saw blocks of slums go up in smoke.

Luckily only three people were hurt. But Atlanta was aroused at last. Newspapers were filled with the horror there was and the much greater horror there might have been.

" 'Only luck and the valiant work of the fire department,' " a paper reported the next morning, " 'kept Sunday's fire from spreading into a wide conflagration,' said R. S. Hammond, Chairman of the Fire Prevention Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, as he urged today that the city take necessary steps immediately to obtain government slum clearance funds to rebuild the now smoldering area as a slum clearance project 'before other shacks spring up similar to those that burned, gravely endangering Grady Hospital.' "

Another newspaper said:

"Mayor Hartsfield last night said he was not committed either way on the possibility of a housing authority for Atlanta. 'I have appointed a Council Committee to investigate the matter.' "

So again I went into the newspapers with:

"The Chamber President pointed out that the Federal government furnishes nine-tenths of the cost of each project, with the local Housing Authority putting up the other tenth. This amount, he said, might be in the form of streets, parkways, sewers, and other services which the city may have already provided for."

Such factual arguments didn't mean much to closed political minds. But the narrow escape of Grady Hospital from

total destruction—and perhaps the loss of many lives—was having its effect. Atlantans were up in arms. So much so that Hartsfield's committee began to realize that it was in a hot spot and became even more evasive. Robert Carpenter, its chairman, was always "out of the city" and the members had "no comment."

We kept the heat on. But still no meeting of the committee, and still the Mayor refused to commit himself. To smoke them out, we had a resolution introduced into the Council that instructed the Mayor to act, and had the resolution referred to the Housing Committee. Then the committee was forced to take action, and a public hearing was required.

Two more weeks went by, and finally the hearing was held. Our side showed up in such force that we had the committee pretty well whipped before the testimony began. After all, what the politicians seemed to seek was proof that they'd get more votes from the decent citizens who wanted slums wiped out than they would lose from those predatory persons who preyed upon slums.

Besides civic leaders, department heads of the city were present. Fire Chief Parker testified, "We used to have one call a day at least to the Techwood section, but since the improvements were made we never get called down there." Sanitary Chief Cates said the blighted areas were the centers for the spread of disease; and City Parks Manager Simons told of the juvenile delinquents found around park areas near slums. Dewey Johnson, president of the Atlanta Federation of Trades, stated that "if we have one bit of feeling for humanity, we shouldn't become reconciled to such conditions."

It was such a good show that the committee could find no out. But again undercover circumlocution set in. Alderman J. Allen Couch, notorious for always being on the wrong side

of everything, maneuvered the city fathers into a still further delay of two weeks by referring the ordinance to the Finance Committee.

Over the weekend of May 1, I had gone to Washington to keep Atlanta's foot in the housing door because there was a real likelihood that all the federal funds for housing would be earmarked before we could legally qualify. My fears were well founded. Nathan Straus, administrator of the United States Housing Authority, told me on Sunday that allocations would be complete by June 1, but that if we hurried Atlanta might get between eight and fifteen million dollars.

While in Washington, I spoke by request at the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. Back to mind came December 4, 1929, when I had sat in the same Chamber Auditorium with a lot of these same business and industrial leaders. We had heard President Hoover tell us that things would be all right pretty soon. Then the whole gang had wanted help, any kind of help at all. But Hoover didn't provide it. Roosevelt did. And that help—though they wouldn't admit it—had saved the skins of the carping speakers who preceded me.

They were so much against our country's present leadership that they were sitting ducks for an editorial I had recently read, "The Againsters," which had just appeared in the Waycross, Georgia, *Journal-Herald*: "The againster cannot be against anything until somebody starts something.... He hasn't the slightest idea what to do or what to think until somebody starts something.... The againster never goes beyond being against...."

So I sounded off. I said that being "for" instead of "against" was really paying off down South, especially in slum clearance. I pointed out that thirty-three cities in eleven

southeastern states already had $90,000,000 earmarked for them, and were going out "for" more.

There wasn't much applause. The U.S. Chamber's staff had tuned their instruments to a different key. But that was not the key in which the Atlanta Chamber played. By being "forsters" and striking up its own tune, our Chamber had brought $9,000,000 to Atlanta for slum clearance. Why, that was more than the total of all our building permits during the past three years.

After I returned to Atlanta, there was every reason to expect victory when our City Fathers met on May 18. Council voted the authority, but one alderman, Roy Callaway, decided to play the role of King Canute, and commanded the tide to stand still by moving to reconsider. His action slowed us up again.

But not for long. For some reason I never fathomed, the following week Callaway withdrew his motion. This automatically passed the buck to the Mayor. Maybe that's what Callaway had in mind after finding the seat too hot for himself.

The Mayor had been snowed under and began to shovel his way out. He finally signed the measure and appointed a banker, two businessmen, a labor leader, and me as chairman of the Authority. We then got down to work in earnest.

The very next day two of us were off for Washington, hoping we were not too late. "We don't know how much money Atlanta will get for slum clearance and housing," I told reporters, "but we hope the figure of between eight and fifteen million will stand."

On July 2, the morning *Constitution* screamed in an eight-column head across its front page: *"$9,000,000 GIVEN TO CITY TO CLEAR SLUMS"* and *"MAYOR IS ELATED."*

Even a mayor with Hartsfield's hindsight couldn't refuse that kind of money.

By September we had 2,500 units under architectural contract to be built in two white and two colored projects for about 11,000 former slum dwellers. Over $3,000,000 was for expansion of Techwood. We named the new project Clark Howell Homes, after the man who had helped so much in the early days. Another $3,000,000 went for enlargement of the University project. We called this John Hope Homes because elderly John Hope had practically paid with his life for it by sapping his meager strength during the early fights on housing.

By year's end our funds from Washington had been increased to about $15,000,000, and Grady Homes was added to our housing program. It removed forever the threat of fire from our public hospital. Capitol Homes, too, was under way, wiping from the shadow of our State House the sorry shacks that had lingered there for generations.

At long last Uncle Sam caught up with himself. When General Sherman's Federal Troops were a bit careless with fire in Atlanta in November, 1864, they burned 3,500 of the 4,000 structures then in the city. Federal funds replaced them in full measure with 4,996 low-rent homes by 1940. After 76 years, Uncle Sam helped rebuild *more than Sherman burned.*

Between trips to Washington for Atlanta housing, other chores were not being left undone. One was particularly pleasant: to be a representative of the United States at the sixteenth annual meeting of the International Federation for Housing and Town Planning in Mexico City in August, 1938. Although Laura and I were involved in a train wreck, we returned home none the worse for wear.

The wreck occurred near Queretaro when our crack south-

bound Sunshine Special drove head on into the northbound Sunshine Special at 2:45 A.M., August 13. Five passengers were instantly killed, and four of twelve injured died later.

My head was rammed into the wall of the upper berth. The resulting stiff neck made me wonder why Pullmans aren't made up feet first instead of head first. Thinking that we were in a bandit holdup—there'd been one near that spot the week before—I left my uninjured wife to investigate, suggesting that she keep the drawing-room door locked. But when I returned for my cameras as the sun came up, Laura was nowhere around. Just as on our trips to Europe, she had decided not to miss a thing in Mexico, either, and she didn't.

Blame for the mess was placed by some on the "Goldshirts," a subversive organization, in an attempt to discredit the operation of the railroad by labor that had been in charge of the roads for but a few months. Their hope was that the wreck would cause an international incident, because there were official representatives to the Congress on board from England, Canada, Sweden, and the United States.

Certainly Great Britain would not have taken it lightly if such distinguished British subjects on board as George Pepler, president of the Federation, or Miss E. E. Halton, its Honourable Secretary, had been injured. Their high position in England was later confirmed by elevation to knighthood because of outstanding leadership in housing throughout the British Commonwealth and the world. They are now married, and it is Sir George and Lady Pepler.

When we eventually arrived in Mexico City around midnight, I called the morning paper on the hunch that they would develop my pictures of the wreck immediately in exchange for their use. The hunch turned out to be a ten strike for an amateur photographer. Within a few hours the

newspaper *Excelsior, El Periódico de la Vida Nacional* was on the streets with four enlargements of my snapshots on the first page with the credit line: *Fotos Cortesía del Sr. C. F. Palmer.*

One of our first trips was to the salt-sea reclamation at Texcoco. There housing again proved to be much the same the world over. Where the Mexican Government had rehabilitated 24,000 acres and done much new building, they had used the same basic methods as the Italians in the Pontine Marshes and the Dutch in the Zuider Zee projects.

Later, Housing Chief Carlos Contreras took us through public-housing projects in Mexico City, where we found that he had kept out all frills. Adobe construction was used and well used. Sanitary facilities were adequate and far above the Mexican average. Charcoal stoves were standard equipment, and welcomed by the former slum dwellers as much better than any cooking arrangements they'd previously had.

During this Mexican trip a challenging idea that came to me was the chance for the nations of North and South America to work together on housing. I found such ready understanding in this field with the delegates from south of our border that housing seemed an Esperanto worth expanding. And so on my return to the States I included the suggestion—that Uncle Sam take the lead in setting up a North American–South American Housing Axis—in the confidential report I made to Alexander V. Dye, director, and N. H. Engle, assistant director, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the United States.

Public housing in New Orleans was going ahead by midfall, but some "arousements" were needed so businessmen would understand the movement better. William J. Guste,

chairman, Members Council, New Orleans Association of Commerce, asked me to undertake the job. I accepted and made a talk on October 6 called "The Businessman and Subsidized Housing." The top leaders of New Orleans were at the meeting. Here is part of what *The Times-Picayune* reported the next day:

"Mr. Palmer said, 'In Atlanta, where the first public housing project in this country has been completed, we found that every individual in the slum areas was costing the government $33 more than was collected from the areas in taxes. Since 60,000 people in Atlanta are inadequately housed, this represents a subsidy to the slums of $2,000,000, enough to amortize the investment and pay the interest on $50,000,000 worth of homes and decent apartments. We figure it is better business to subsidize housing than to subsidize slums. As slums are eradicated, insurance rates and police and health expenditures go down and property values go up.' "

Colonel L. Kemper Williams, leading New Orleans businessman and chairman of the Housing Authority, felt that others of his fellow citizens should hear similar arguments from the same source. And so on November 7 I found myself back in New Orleans as the principal speaker at the kickoff dinner of the 1939 Community Chest Campaign. The over eight hundred men and women present formed a true cross section of the city. Fifty-five agencies, many of which worked in slums, participated in the program.

"Would you know," I said in part, "where your slums are? Then place a pin on the map for each person helped through the Community Chest. The pattern will accurately trace the slums. . . . An atheist once said, 'If I were God I would have made health contagious, not disease.' But that was not God's plan. He so designed this scheme of things that we must

show our spirit by fighting disease and vice ourselves.... With the projects your New Orleans Housing Authority has so well devised, and the great accomplishments of your Community Chest, you have twin movements, invaluable to each other and both preventatives."

22 T.N.T.

ON OCTOBER 11—14, 1938, the sixth annual meeting of the National Association of Housing Officials was held in Washington. Scheduled to handle a phase of the program, I attended the meeting but was called back to Atlanta before I was able to do much.

The NAHO was now paying more attention to operating and administrative problems than to Federal legislation. So much so that the increasing threat of war in Europe—which could upset our slum-clearance program overnight—was all but lost sight of.

As early as October, 1936, I had accepted the inevitability of a major catastrophe. War was in the air throughout the trip abroad that summer. And on my return I said so to the newspapermen.

Great Britain had to curtail her housing program. War for Europe seemed just around the corner in the fall of 1938. When it came, who would be so foolish in America as to think that we could stay out of it? Or that slum clearance and housing would escape necessary cuts?

I got so steamed up that I tried to devise a program for housing so closely related to war that it would be part and parcel of preparedness. Others didn't see eye to eye with me.

War for the U.S. seemed far away to them, especially to Nathan Straus, the USHA administrator, the man most responsible for keeping our slum-clearance program rolling. Nevertheless, I felt that something had to be done—and fast.

Taking Trystan Edwards's Hundred New Towns for Britain as a base, I outlined how we could build Twenty New Towns (T.N.T.) for America, all of them convertible into troop cantonments. I airmailed a résumé to Straus in September, 1938. In it I said that we should be prepared to convert slum-clearance housing into a war industry so that it would have priority for labor and materials, additional appropriations, and federal condemnation in land acquisition. It could, I said, justify classification as a war industry because the projects would replace cantonments pending use for permanent housing; the investment would not be lost as with barracks; and speed could be obtained by mass production.

Richard Bauer, who had designed Leopoldau and other new towns in Austria, collaborated on the layouts. He had fled from the Nazis, so I had just brought him and his wife to America, where he settled as a practicing architect in Atlanta.

Straus was so far from realistic about impending war, despite the fact that he was trying for legislation to give slum clearance $800,000,000 more, that I was unable to arrange a face-to-face conference with him. He did nothing about my letter, as far as I know, and subsequent prodding, week after week, got nowhere. It was the same old merry-go-round, so I decided to try the White House again.

In November I wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt, who was at the Little White House with the President at the time. After explaining the situation, I said that I would be happy to come to Warm Springs to discuss the matter, or I could present it in Washington the following month since Laura and I had

accepted with delight an invitation to the Cabinet dinner at the White House on December 13.

Mrs. Roosevelt replied promptly and with understanding to the idea of tying housing to war, and suggested that I draw up a memorandum that she could give to the President. In it I briefly outlined T.N.T., as I had to Straus. I also pointed out that it would ensure constant federal control of immediate accommodations for one million recruits. Finally, it would eliminate loss from abandonment of cantonments and save the Twenty Towns as housing assets.

There was naturally no opportunity to talk housing with the President or Mrs. Roosevelt at the Cabinet dinner as there were eighty-six guests beside ourselves. But there was the chance to discuss the University Homes project for Negroes near Atlanta's colored university with John D. Rockefeller, Jr. One of its colleges had been made possible through Rockefeller grants and was called Spelman, the maiden name of Mr. Rockefeller's mother.

We were introduced in the East Room before going to dinner in the State Dining Room. I was startled when I met Mr. Rockefeller, as published pictures had given me the impression that he was a tall man. That massive head, it had seemed to me, would need at least six-feet-two to carry it. But I discovered that he was well below my own height, and I'm only five seven. But that was fine with me as it enabled me to look directly into his clear-blue, kindly eyes. They flashed with interest as soon as John Hope was mentioned.

Yes, he agreed, it was a miracle that Beavers' Slide had been replaced with University Homes. With such slums wiped out, more money for the university was justified. We were going to keep up slum clearance, weren't we?

That's exactly what we intended, I assured Mr. Rockefeller, but it wasn't easy. However, we had tentative plans

for expansion of University Homes with a project of 600 units to be named for Dr. John Hope. That news delighted him, and he asked many pertinent questions before we went into dinner. Such influential supporters were altogether too few and far apart.

Parenthetically, I had enough foresight not to talk housing with my wife's dinner partner, that rugged Bourbon, old Joe Patterson, publisher of the *New York Daily News*. He frankly admitted it was his first trip to the White House, that he hadn't the slightest idea why he was asked, and he felt like a fish out of water. Then he proudly exhibited the white gloves he was wearing. He had hurt his hand and felt that the bruise was unsightly, so that afternoon he'd bought a pair of ordinary workman's gloves to cover up the injury. Although all the men present were wearing white ties, Colonel Joe was the only one with white gloves, and very likely the only guest ever to wear workman's gloves at a formal state dinner in the White House.

When Laura and I lunched with Mrs. Roosevelt in the family dining room of the White House the next day, she said that she had gone into the proposal for Twenty New Towns and would circulate my memo to the various Cabinet members concerned with such a project: the Secretaries of Treasury, War, and Agriculture. Mrs. Roosevelt said she expected that the memo would make the rounds and be back in her hands with comments by mid-January.

But when the replies did come back, it wasn't January but June. And upon reviewing them I found that they all used a common approach: how not to do it.

Surely, there were problems. But taken one by one, every objection raised by the three Cabinet members could be met. The need was for someone who would seek "how to do it," and not gum up the works while the plan was still only

on paper. Just as with the Housing Act of 1937, that meant the President.

Meanwhile, I wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt's secretary, Miss Thompson, that the objections raised to the idea of Twenty New Towns had been foreseen and could be answered through a movie I had.

Just four days after I made the offer to send the films, Mrs. Roosevelt replied that she was much interested and would let me know later when and where to send them. In November, learning that she and the President would be in Georgia later in the month, I suggested bringing the movies to Warm Springs and mentioned that it would also give me an opportunity to discuss with the President how Twenty New Towns, convertible into cantonments, could be an ace in the hole if Congress refused the additional $800,000,000 for USHA.

The Roosevelts, however, didn't have a chance to see the movies while in Georgia. So T.N.T., the Twenty New Towns, just petered out, as also did the USHA request for $800,000,000. They were both buried in an unmarked grave as our nation girded for war.

I kept on making speeches on housing a couple of times a week all over the place. I also wrote articles on the subject for various periodicals. Although slum clearance was being shunted aside for more urgent military preparations, I still didn't believe in letting sleeping dogs lie.

At the National Public Housing Conference in New York the following January, Mayor LaGuardia spoke on "Housing, the City's First Duty," and others of such prominence as Marquis Childs carried the ball for housing, too. My subject had to do with operating the projects.

This gave me a long-wanted opening to say in public what I had been saying to USHA month after month in Washing-

ton: that projects were being designed with too high a standard. The down-to-earth jobs I had seen in England with the sitting-bath-laundry-tub-table-combination and "back-to-back" stoves had proved I was right. The Associated Press quoted me as saying:

"Given too much, the former slum dweller lacks the incentive to climb above housing. Furthermore, semi-luxuries will kill public housing because the group of middle-class voters will rightly oppose any movement which gives conveniences to the lower one-third which those who furnish the subsidies do not have themselves. Only such dwellings can be built at subsidies which the voters will support, and operated at rents those now ill-housed can afford to pay."

The lavish facilities being provided in some projects, and the high maintenance costs certain to follow, alarmed me because such design could discredit the entire slum-clearance movement. Also the lower the operating costs, the less subsidy per dwelling needed; consequently, more dwellings could be built. That the simple, economical type of design I suggested was long past due was confirmed by a report made to the National Association of Housing Officials later that year:

"First Houses, an early project in New York," it read "has not only been the object of criticism, but has also been wilfully damaged by neighbors of the same economic group as the tenants, and even those somewhat above it. Although this was reported to represent an effective demand for housing within the very group which should be interested, some participants in the discussion saw in the attitude effective opposition in the process of creation; and possibly a warning against too much of a contrast in standards between new and existing housing."

The need for realism continued to be equally pressing in the National Association of Building Owners and Managers,

with this difference: the Public Housers wanted to go too far, while the Building Owners didn't want to go at all. But I felt that I shouldn't push either group too hard. The Atlanta Chamber of Commerce had finally caught on, and I was sure that BOMA would finally see the light. As I've previously mentioned, many of its members were already leaders in local Housing Authorities. And the extremists of N.P.H.C. would very likely settle down one day. That's how democracy usually worked. At least, our public officials were catching on, as indicated by the forthright statement in the May 7 issue of *The Atlanta Constitution* by Garland Watkins, judge of our Juvenile Court for many years:

"In certain sections of the city, five to ten families live in houses formerly inhabited by one family.... Many slum sections are owned by Atlantans who do not realize how terrible the conditions are. The thought has not occurred to them that sickness, disease and unhappiness are so prevalent on their properties, or possibly they do not realize their own interests are at stake in improving existing situations.... Without the steps now being taken by the Atlanta Housing Authority, we could expect tragic and serious consequences, vitally effecting the lives of every man, woman and child in the city."

Among the "steps now being taken" was an especially well-thought-through and carefully planned project to solve, once and for all, the slum problem between Hunter Street and West View Drive, where whites and colored frequently clashed in their overcrowded and intermingled dwellings. In this border area, women had been raped, houses burned, and bombs thrown. To relieve this congestion was virtually a matter of life and death.

There were, fortunately, fifty-six acres of almost vacant land available nearby. The site was close to Booker T. Wash-

ington High School, the largest and best equipped school for Negroes, and not far from Atlanta University. The whole area, with its playgrounds, athletic fields, a library, and day nurseries, was the best colored neighborhood in the city.

Along West View Drive, where pressure from the slums was forcing Negroes into a well-established neighborhood of whites, our project called for a green belt several hundred feet wide. There were to be 1,200 dwellings, many times the number then on the site, additional playing fields, an amphitheater, and as many more community facilities as required.

The Atlanta Housing Authority allocated $3,500,000 for the job from the $16,000,000 then available to Atlanta, and announced that the development would be named John Eagan Homes in honor of a great Atlanta capitalist. Before his death, Mr. Eagan had founded the Juvenile Court. He was a distinguished philanthropist and had led in establishing, with many other white and colored leaders, the Committee on Inter-Racial Relationships. This committee had settled innumerable conflicts between the races and had prevented many more throughout the South.

No sooner did our Housing Authority announce the John Eagan Homes, which we thought would make everybody happy, than an avalanche of protests fell upon us. Many white residents across West View Drive were incensed because the project would increase the number of Negro families in that section of the city. They ignored the green belt which would make John Eagan Homes a self-contained community. So much hysteria was stimulated among normally reasonable citizens that we wondered who was misrepresenting our plans. Roundabout threats began to reach me. They seemed to have a Ku-Klux Klan origin.

A mass meeting was called for May 9, 1939, by the "antis" at the Joel Chandler Harris High School, three blocks from

West View Drive. To be sure that all parties would have a chance to get the facts and say their say, the Housing Authority postponed the bid-letting for the project.

It was a sad commentary that the mass meeting, packed by prejudiced people unwilling to examine the project dispassionately, should be held in Joel Chandler Harris High School, named for the beloved author of the Uncle Remus stories. This school, which honored the man who knew the Negro best and who treated him with the greatest justice, was to be the sounding board for those who were too blind to see the right.

Mayor Hartsfield attended and, as usual, straddled his rocking horse. Apparently Bill was being scorched by political heat again. But all those who were neither in politics nor emotionally involved agreed that the project was a sensible solution to the harassing problem.

The Housing Authority refused to be sidetracked, and so another meeting was called for May 30 at the same place. Not having been asked to the first meeting, I fished for a bid to the second one. It came in a roundabout way, coupled with the caution that maybe I'd better stay away. But I was determined to attend. However, Laura cautioned me that discretion is the better part of valor, so—just in case—I took along the assistant executive director of our Housing Authority, James H. Therrell, whose six-feet-four towered over my modest height. I earnestly believed that if my fellow Atlantans heard how far ahead we were planning and gave me a chance to answer their questions, many of them would come over to our side.

When Jim and I arrived, the school was packed, and hundreds had overflowed into the playgrounds outside where loud-speakers had been set up. We elbowed our way through the crowd and took positions near the rostrum.

Fred Ernest, a resident of the area, told the group that seven hundred neighbors had signed petitions in favor of the housing. He expressed the opinion that the entire locality would grow steadily worse unless the projects materialized.

Ernest and I argued the merits of the case while those against took the position that even if we convinced them, they still would be "agin" it and would keep on fighting. When the time came for questions, none were asked from the floor. Obviously the crowd were so set in their notions that they didn't want to hear the answers. So the meeting adjourned after appointing a committee to "investigate the legal aspects."

Jim and I stayed for a while, and a not too unfriendly group gathered around us. A few asked intelligent questions, and our replies apparently satisfied them. Finally we eased out of the school and headed through the throng still loitering on the playground. As we entered our car and Jim started the motor, one of several husky men who I had noticed kept near us throughout the evening stuck his head through the open window. "We're plain-clothes men from the Police Department," he whispered. "Sure glad you're getting out of here at last."

In one way our harassing experience was worth while. It brought out the great truth that public projects are only as good as their citizen acceptance. The meeting convinced us that the people of that neighborhood were firmly determined not to accept John Eagan Homes, regardless of its merits. So we switched the funds to another part of the city, much to the later regret of many who had opposed us.

If this experience had been the rule rather than the exception, we would have been deeply discouraged. Fortunately, however, we were finding just the opposite reaction from the

public at large. The acclaim that was generally given to our first annual report, published in November, 1939, proved that housing in Atlanta had come of age.

A great deal of thought and care had gone into the preparation of the report. Air views of the slums to be cleared were accompanied by maps spotting every shack to be wrecked. Superimposed on each map was a transparent overlay that showed how each slum neighborhood would look when transformed into "decent, safe, and sanitary housing." Companion photographs gave graphic views of the squalor and congestion that would soon disappear forever. The text, written by Philip Weltner, executive director of the Housing Authority, did an excellent job, too.

Acceptance by public officials was quoted in the report. It was led off by Mayor Hartsfield, who said, "We cannot blame the poor but the poor can blame us if with our Housing Authority we do not promptly improve conditions." The Mayor, of all people, was now on our side.

A friend once said to me that anything has to be really good if you are going to give it away. Not just reasonably good, but mighty good. The Housing Authority Report, which was distributed free, seemed to me to meet that requirement so well that I shared it widely with conservatives and liberals alike. The comments we received were most encouraging.

From Thomas I. Parkinson, president, the Equitable Life Assurance Society of the United States: "I take off my hat to you and your colleagues for your performance." That was quite a contrast to the position taken by insurance-company presidents in the first days of public housing.

From John D. Rockefeller, Jr.: "Sets forth so vividly and satisfactorily what you are doing. I congratulate you on such a comprehensive program."

From Henry Grady, Jr., investment banker of Atlanta: "It always struck me that this is a wonderful work. If my grandfather were alive, he would feel the same way."

From Edsel Ford: "A most progressive attitude towards cleaning out some of the blighted areas in your city.... We have twelve or fifteen apartments and terraces open for occupancy and are about ready to start on a sample individual house project before going ahead on a large scale." At last the Fords were catching on in a big way, not only accepting public housing but also using their Foundation Funds to build white-collar projects themselves.

From Lewis H. Brown, president, Johns-Mansville Corporation: "An amazingly interesting Annual Report. I am sure that every dollar expended under your Authority has been well spent."

From Catherine Bauer, one of the Washington old-time housers: "I shall use it for a primary document in my housing courses at the University of California next semester." To which I replied: "Our local schools are using 600 copies as textbooks."

What Herbert U. Nelson, executive vice-president of the National Association of Real Estate Boards, wrote had to be taken with a grain of salt: "I like the name of this report which indicates the real scope of the efforts taken in so many cities." He might have added: "In spite of all I have done to try to prevent such efforts." Then Herb went on, "I have admired the constructive way you have proceeded in spite of what must have been irksome criticism at times." Again Herb could have added, "Criticism that I helped to foster." I wished that his next comment could have been taken at its face value: "My own feeling has always been that property owners and real estate men should take a constructive and active part and not let prejudices stand in the way." Here

Herb should have added, "Although I have done all I could to stop them."

The reaction of Atlanta newspapers brought out new angles. *The Journal of Labor* referred to the job that faced our forebears in rebuilding Atlanta in 1865 after its destruction during the Civil War and said:

"Now we have before us a picture of a second rebuilding of Atlanta: the ambitious program of the Housing Authority for the elimination of our slum areas. Some will say, 'It's all right in theory and would be a mighty fine thing if we only had the money.' Suppose that in 1865 our fathers had made the same comment? Where would Atlanta have been today? Would it be too much to ask that we look forward a half-century and ask ourselves the same question? This picture by the Housing Authority is going to stand. The future will look back to it. As the next generation does so, will it be able to say, 'This is what our fathers planned and did,' or will they have to say, 'This is what our fathers might have done but didn't' "?

The most prolonged exchange was with Bruce Barton, then a Republican member of Congress from New York. We had met in Atlanta some years before. Bruce wrote saying:

"All of us agree on the desirability of better housing, but the Republicans argued, first, that this is not low-priced housing, second, that the program we are pursuing was attempted by England and abandoned on the ground that it would wreck the English treasury and, third, that subsidized slum clearance would plunge us into a debt of astronomical proportions. To what extent do you regard these criticisms as justified, and what position could the Republican Party take that would enable it to support slum clearance and yet not threaten the solvency of the nation?"

I let Bruce have both barrels in a twelve-page reply. Our

family had just gone through the greatest Atlanta *première* of all time, with our eldest daughter, Margaret, chosen to lead the gala grand march. "Now," I wrote Bruce, "that *Gone with the Wind* has reduced the emotions of Atlantans to ashes as surely as Sherman did its buildings, let's resume where we left off on housing." Then the pros and cons marched by in review, page after page, each nailed down with the facts.

I summed up with:

"Have I helped answer the criticisms? If so, the conclusion is clear. Go after the Democrats the way Sir Arthur Henderson did the London County Council! He yelled, 'A million and a half still live in slums!' and unseated the party in power, although it was doing a good job just as is true of U.S.H.A. That's what the Republican Party should do. It's smart politics, but it's more. It is good business, but it is more. It is sound sociology. And the *voters* are for it. How do I know? First, by showing my movies all over the place. Regularly the old Tories come up to me afterwards and say, 'Why the devil doesn't Roosevelt do more housing and slum clearance? I'd be for that in a big way.' And as for the Liberals, they are 'pro,' of course. Secondly, look how housing authorities are sprouting across the country, proving that the man in the street is for them. There's the answer, Bruce. Go the Democrats one better. Political history of the older countries proves me right. Housing no longer is an issue; everybody's on board the band wagon. So if eventually, why not now?"

Bruce replied that I had given him a different picture of housing, and he was beginning to feel that if and when the Republican Party came into power, "we ought to give the matter very serious attention."

Would the Republicans act on what seemed to be Bruce Barton's conversion? Not by a long shot! A paper, "A Program for Dynamic America," later published by the Republi-

can Program Committee, summed up their position in no uncertain terms: "It is simply out of the question to solve the total housing program, or any part of it, through government appropriations."

Oh, well, I thought, dead-end streets had been traveled before. There are lots of them in slums.

I hesitated to share the Atlanta report with housing leaders overseas. The war had completely halted their slum-clearance programs, and it seemed untimely to call their attention to how well ours was doing. However, I did send a few copies to England and the Continent, despite the fact that Mars, the god of war, had trampled with his iron-shod boots all over their public housing.

My old friend John Wrigley, of the Overcrowding Law, had just moved several hundred thousand children from the bombed cities of Britain to the protection of the country. A lump came into my throat as I read the letter from him saying "Your report fills me with a certain feeling of homesickness. We have had a busy time over the evacuation scheme." What a master of understatement he was!

No, there would be no more normal slum clearance while Mars was loose in the world. He was an indiscriminate destroyer of good and evil, while slum clearance destroyed only that which was bad and replaced it with the good.

23 NO END TO ADVENTURE

WE WERE sitting on the terrace of our cottage at Warm Springs, Laura and I. From our vantage point on Pine Mountain, Georgia, we overlooked miles of peach orchards in the valley below. Nearby was Franklin Roosevelt's Little White House and the Polio Foundation. A breeze swishing to and fro through the long-leaf pines was like a surf on a shore far away. The clouds on the distant horizon shimmered in the manifold hues of the afterglow as the sun sank behind us. It was a Sunday in June, 1955. I put down the manuscript of my book and took a deep breath as I filled my pipe.

"Is that sigh," Laura asked, "because the book is done?"

"I'm afraid I don't know what you mean, darlin'. Just look at all this unused material." I glanced at a particularly formidable stack of notes and clippings. "Why, the last chapter has just brought us up to the war."

"Every book has an ending," Laura quietly remarked.

"But not the housing of humanity," I reminded her. "That is as much a problem today as it was when we first tackled it nearly a quarter-century ago."

"Some progress has been made, though."

"Not too much in our country, I'm afraid. We're still way behind Europe."

"Well the groundwork has been laid," Laura said. "The homes in Techwood look as fresh and clean, the grass is as green as when President Roosevelt dedicated them in 1935. And we have the federal housing law on which you worked so hard. What are the latest figures?" I read from my notes. " 'Over 400,000 needy families are now provided for through 900 Public Housing Authorities.'

"But that's mighty little," I continued, "compared with the great need. However, there have been worth-while by-products. We've made some influential converts. Just listen to this." I picked up a news item from *The Atlanta Journal,* dated September 9, 1949. "Governor Herman Talmadge has put his stamp of approval on new federal legislation for slum clearance. He told members of the Georgia Association of Housing Authorities that it was 'the best investment we can make for democracy. . . . Right here in Atlanta we see communistic organizations located in the heart of the slum sections. They hope to find a fertile field for their insidious doctrines.' "

"That's a lot of progress," I added, "since Herman's father allowed that 'slums are good for people.' But then, Herman is open-minded and has had the opportunity to see the results of slum clearance over the years. Eugene Talmadge wasn't that fortunate."

"Old Gene was a colorful character," Laura said with a reflective smile.

"And here's another convert." I read a dispatch from New Orleans to the *Journal,* dated November 30, 1953. "*HARTSFIELD SCOFFS AT CRIES OF SOCIALISM IN HOUSING.* More than 1,000 mayors and city officials opened the annual convention of the American Municipal Association Monday. Atlanta's Mayor Hartsfield, President of the Association, scoffed at calling public housing 'creeping socialism.'

'Everything a city does,' he said, 'is a form of socialism. For a lot of people their definition of creeping socialism is what the government does for other people. If the real estate and mortgage people get loans from the government, it's not socialism. But if the government helps the little man, then it is.' "

"Bravo for our mayor!" Laura exclaimed.

"That Bill and Herman at last spoke out," I said, "means that public housing has arrived. Each keeps an ear toward the voters so both heard the swelling chorus of citizen support. Unfortunately, a lot of other public officials haven't caught on yet. They are still listening to attacks by the National Association of Real Estate Boards, such as Herb Nelson started years ago when he was executive director.

"Here's the resolution the board adopted at its annual convention just last November. 'Public housing is un-American. We deplore the continuing evil of government ownership and government subsidy of family shelter. We urge the Congress to terminate the public housing program, and we call upon the states and communities to proceed toward the orderly liquidation of existing public housing projects and their transfer to full tax-paying private ownership, preferably to the tenants of such projects.'

"The last part of that resolution would be comic if it wasn't so tragic," I said. "It's ludicrous that businessmen would urge the sale of public housing to its occupants, who can only qualify as tenants by proving such low incomes that they must have subsidy. In other words, they must convince the authorities that their earnings are so meager they can't feed and clothe their families and still have enough left to pay the level of rent that private capital must charge to secure an adequate return on the cost of decent housing. How can

such unfortunates buy when they can't even pay an economic rent?"

"Your question answers itself," Laura replied. "But surely not all members of the Real Estate Board agree with such nonsense, do they?"

"Of course not," I declared. "But the many of the board who know we are on the right track have been too indifferent to take up the cudgels in our support. Instead they have sidestepped. They've let the minority misrepresent them. That's the tragedy of it."

Laura reduced my rising steam pressure with a smiling thrust that my real-estate colleagues and their resolution were as ridiculous as the Russians with their dining-car menu.

"As far as absurdity goes, you're right," I agreed. "But our real-estate crowd isn't usually so mixed up while the Russians seem to make a habit of confusion."

Absent-mindedly I tamped and relighted my pipe. Then I glimpsed the signature of a letter among the papers on the table. It was from Dwight D. Eisenhower. "Well anyway, darlin', the top man in our country thinks straight about the problem and has put himself on record." I read from what he wrote me in 1949. " 'Most heartily I agree with you that slum clearance is vital to the well-being of the United States.' What he then wrote as president of Columbia University, he reaffirmed as President of the United States. In his 1954 message to Congress, he laid it on the line. Let's see if I can find the clipping. Here it is. 'Millions of our people still live in slums.... The national interest demands the elimination of slum conditions and the rehabilitation of declining neighborhoods.'

"Those are strong words and still mighty true. Why right now, according to the latest statistics, there are six million families—about twenty-four million people—living in Ameri-

can slums. We have the knowledge and the means to pretty well lick that problem during the next ten years. It means building and subsidizing six hundred thousand units annually, a relatively small program compared with what the Dutch accomplished. But did President Eisenhower ask for that many units? No, he recommended a trickle of thirty-five thousand a year for the next four years. Not because he doesn't know that 'slum clearance is vital' and that 'the national interest demands the elimination of slum conditions.' It was simply because the minority who oppose low-rent housing are better organized and more vocal with congressmen and senators than the majority who favor it.

"Probably the President decided not to ask for what he knew he couldn't get unless he put up a hard fight. That fight he was evidently disinclined to make without the backing of his own party, which he didn't have and couldn't get without using a sledge hammer on the stone wall of its opposition. Bruce Barton must have bumped his head against that same wall in 1940, when he seemed to be converted to slum clearance as a policy for the Republican Party. At least nothing ever came of Bruce's conversion."

"So what?" Laura inquired. It was our family's signal to sum up, taken from a book on public speaking I had read years ago which declared that every audience went through four stages of listening: (1) Ho-Hum; (2) Why Bring That Up?; (3) For Example; (4) So What?

"I don't believe I know the answer, darlin'," I replied. "If you mean, do I intend to keep on adding more chapters, then maybe the answer is 'No,' because, as you say, every book has to end. But if your question is about fighting slums and continuing to study them, wherever they may be throughout the world, what else would you have me do?"

"I wouldn't have you otherwise," Laura said with a smile.

"After all, the fight won't end with the last page of the book, any more than our roaming will. And that's just the way I like it. Particularly our flight to most of the countries of Latin America in 1952. Remember our disgust at Evita's prostitution of public housing for the poor in Buenos Aires by overdoing it with apartments that even included crystal chandeliers? And our delight with the common-sense housing that Señora Gonzalez Videla, wife of the President of Chile, showed us she had built in Santiago? I guess, dear, that fighting slums is to be a never-ending adventure for us both. The problem is world-wide."

"And upon its solution," I added thoughtfully, "much of the future of mankind depends."

As we talked, the sun had set and the hills across the valley were now wrapped in the deep-blue haze of evening. Dimly against the sky I could distinguish the silhouette of my favorite pine. There it stood. The outline of its grotesque limbs, tortured by years of battle against its every foe, would have been disheartening, had not the age-old triumph of that wind-swept tree transcended all else.

INDEX

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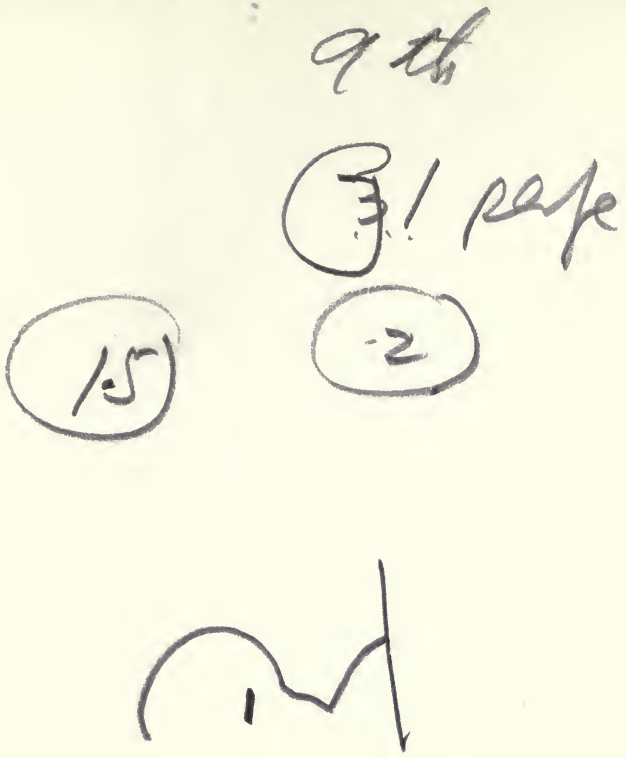


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