

The Housing Crisis

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BY TIMOTHY G. TURNER

It is beyond the point of this article to place blame for the **housing shortage**. It has a combination of causes, war-work population shifts, one-way migration from country to city, population increase with no building since the war, an arbitrary O.P.A., an innated real estate market and those people "who won't go back home where they belong."

We are confronted with a situation that is critical and since the building industry cannot get into full gear for at least a year it will get worse. What will be the economic and social results, perhaps even revolutionary results? It is revolutionary when, as in England during the war, vacant rooms in private homes are taken over to house the homeless. Next to food, housing is the most vital necessity of human beings.

There should be a moratorium on using dwelling houses for any other purpose and on tearing them down to make way for other "improvements," some-

times merely a parking lot. Fires alone are constantly whittling down the total of housing units.

Not long ago the city of Los Angeles evicted tenants in the way of a freeway project. The other day the local O.P.A. office authorized the eviction of tenants of an apartment house which, the owner said, was to be converted to offices. The owner was a European who bought the property before he came to this country. In what other country in the world would any such thing have been tolerated?

There is no doubt that many landlords have been caught in a squeeze so that they can make no money. Some apartment houses have been closed with O.P.A. permission because of this and there is nothing to do under the circumstances. But in most cases where there are no profits this is because the properties were bought since the war at inflated prices while the rent ceilings remained the same. Should not the Latin legal maxim, "Let the buyer beware," apply here?

President Truman and our own Mayor Bowron have plans to remedy the situation. But they are mostly long-range plans. Army housing, even if we got all of it, wouldn't amount to much.

It is proposed to put ceilings on sales of homes but this is shutting the door after the horse has run away. We are perhaps on the crest of a real estate inflation.

Some landlords have been accused of persecuting their tenants, aiming to rent the apartments at a higher weekly or daily instead of a monthly rate. To do this or cause their eviction is treading on very delicate ground.

The home among civilized people always has been considered sacrosanct. It has all the household gods. To drive people out of their homes when they can't find another roof for their heads is an act that should be considered well. Only God knows what the bitterness engendered would bring us later on.