

A NEW SCHEME TO HOUSE LOW-INCOME PEOPLE

A new scheme to house low-income people has been inaugurated by the Victorian Minister for Housing, Mr. Geoff Hayes. The Fitzroy Collingwood Rental Housing Association is the result of three years' planning and organising by a small group of people interested in preserving housing for low-income people in areas where they wish to live.

Four years ago, the Brotherhood's Executive Director, David Scott returned from a visit to England, convinced that rental housing associations which have been active in the U.K. for the past 80 years, could make a valuable contribution, providing a new form of housing management in Australia. The idea was taken up by SHELTER and a Rental Housing Association Sub-committee was formed.



In November 1976, a proposal was made to Mr. Hayes for the establishment of a Fitzroy/Collingwood Rental Housing Association which would acquire and manage properties to provide accommodation for low-income people who were being displaced by the increase in property values. Mr. Hayes agreed that the Housing Commission would purchase approximately \$1m. worth of properties in Fitzroy and Collingwood and lease them to the Association for a trial 3-year period.

The Association is now formally constituted with a committee of management which will comprise one representative from each of the two Councils, eight elected by tenants, one representative of the Housing Commission and four others with skills and experience in finance, housing management, architecture and planning. The

Executive Officer in Melbourne is architect and town planner, Andrew McCutcheon.

Housing Commission staff and representatives of the Association inspected more than 100 properties and, so far, have purchased 15. The Committee has developed a method of assessing need which takes into account family size and income, current housing situation and the applicant's need to live in the Fitzroy and Collingwood area. The Association stock of housing will include rooming houses for elderly and single people of all ages and 2, 3 and 4-bedroom flats and houses.

One of the first applicants to be offered a tenancy is a family from Lebanon with 10 children who have been sharing a 2-bedroom house with another family with 7 children.

If the Rental Housing Association is successful, it could lead to the

formation of other associations providing low-income people with alternatives to accommodation in high-rise flats or in outer area Housing Commission estates.

It is hoped that tenants will see the Association as a co-operative in which they have involvement in decision-making and that it will lead to tenant co-operation in reducing renovation and maintenance costs. The Victorian Housing Commission is co-operating fully in the experiment. The Commonwealth Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development will provide places in its Housing Allowance Voucher Experiment to enable tenants to meet the difference between 25% of their income and the market rental of the houses or flats.

It is a housing 'first' that the Brotherhood is proud to be associated with.

What We've Been Doing

Two social work students, working with Brotherhood research worker Graeme Brewer, have recently completed a study of people who have been taken off unemployment benefits. They have examined their circumstances, the information available to them and what happens when they appeal against termination of benefits. Another project has been started by students to gather information about the problems faced by single fathers.

In June the Brotherhood was host to a two day consultation organised by the Australian Council of Churches in relation to the formation of a Commission on Church and Society. The meeting, chaired by Rev. Peter Hollingworth, discussed a critique of Australian society by Melbourne sociologist Peter Dwyer which will be published shortly.

Hugh McNally recently retired after nearly 12 years with the Brotherhood. "Mac" started as Activities Officer for the geriatric services, and for the last five years was Manager of Laurence Industries Sheltered Workshop. Geoff Norman from Geelong has taken over from "Mac" at Laurence Industries.

ARC has a SWOP programme and now has swapped people. Peter Gogorosis, Deputy Superintendent from the Western Region Office of the Social Welfare Department, is with ARC for three months. Bob Williams, ARC staff member, is at the Western Region Office for three months. Bob has a chance to learn about bureaucracy from the inside and Peter will gain from his time at ARC.

Although this kind of staff exchange has not taken place before the Social Welfare Department was keen to try it. Both the Department and ARC worked together on planning the exchange so it became a practical demonstration of co-operation between a government department and a self-help programme.

WANTED COOKS FOR THE MARKET FAIR

Can you make a cake or biscuits for the Fair on November 18? If you would like to, please contact Mrs. Thelma Tuxen on 419 7055.