

**DRIVE IS MADE TO BOLSTER SOCIALIZED HOUSING**

In the June 23rd edition of the LA Times, there is a major article entitled "Housing for the Poor Faces Crises" The article states in detail how the government's Section 8 program is collapsing. Under this program, a stated percentage of "low income" rentals is paid by the federal government to favored contractors. Under this program, tenants pay 30% of their monthly income in rent and HUD pays the landlord the difference. Building owners involved agreed to rent the units to low-income tenants for 20 years after which they can exit the

program and raise rents to market levels. The Times notes that an unprecedented number of apartments set aside for low-income tenants nationwide will expire between now and 2006. Usually the successful HUD bidder puts in the very worst and cheapest workmanship and sometimes they eliminate such obvious "unnecessary" items as air conditioning.

This article quotes a statement by a representative of Goldman & Kest which has made a fortune on Section 8 projects. He complained that Goldman & Kest would have to terminate government subsidized rentals as their contractual period ran out since G & K could make a lot more money in the open market. (Your writer may be prejudiced against G & K, having been involved in a legal action against it for defrauding tenants by instructing their building foreman to disregard plans and specifications.) G & K was also noted for giving substantial Christmas gifts to government inspectors and authorities. This procedure of abandonment of subsidized units is already burdening the housing market. ●●●●●●●●●●

In a lead article on the same day, the LA Times wrote that a Grand Jury inquiry stated that businesses in this county have been complaining that their workers can't afford to live here and must move to adjoining counties, thus "clogging the freeways, increasing air pollution, and frazzling the nerves of the commuters before their work day begins." The editorial stated that the solutions may involve allowing heavier density and mixed use commercial and housing communities which take advantage of existing infrastructure such as water and sew-

ers and add housing. Noting that planners contend that the bad situation for very low income workers will get even worse in the days ahead, the Times concludes: "It's time for public-private partnerships with government agencies leading in providing the housing that workers need and can afford."

The Times proposal ignores the fact that, to date, every partnership between public and private housing developments has ended up with the public being rooked by the numbers.

A year ago, the Times published a series of articles showing how the high price of land had destroyed hopes for affordable housing, caused urban sprawl and was chasing business out of California. We phoned the writer, congratulating him on his astute observation, and suggested that the housing crisis might be solved by taking taxes off improvements and shifting them to land. The reporter replied that there wasn't any such arrangement now in existence. When we stated that Sydney, Australia, had made some progress along this line, the reporter stated that nobody was interested in Sydney. We then mentioned that the Olympic games which were going on there had captured the attention of millions of Americans and awakened their interest in Sydney and all of Australia. The reporter then replied that this was outside the scope of the articles he was writing and the conversation ended.

At a recent public meeting sponsored by the University of California, Irvine, School of Social Ecology and the Orange County Council of Governments, your Editor proposed that the County consider acquiring many thousands of acres of improperly zoned "agricultural" land and underdeveloped urban land at current valuations, planning new communities for this public land trust, rezoning accordingly, installing required infrastructure, and then leasing sites to persons willing to build their own high tech/low cost (prefab) homes and nonprofit

building societies (possibly of Orange Co. employers) and other agencies concerned with supplying addendum properties. Structures within these redevelopment districts on publicly leased land would be tax free. But, in all fairness, the whole of Orange County should be rezoned as a Special Development District with all structures being tax free and taxes on land raised to stimulate appropriate development.

Was she too optimistic in expecting that, in a county controlled by a few developers and land speculators, any real solution to the affordable housing problem would be within the scope of any inquiry? ●●●●