

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Housing problems

A Board of Regents subcommittee set up to consider solutions to the alleged UNL married-student housing problem is starting to work this month, with Regent Edward Schwartzkopf of Lincoln as its chairman.

For years various student groups and representatives of Lincoln's low-income community have bombarded the University with demands for more married-student housing. They say UNL's 4,000 married students put severe pressure on Lincoln's low-income housing market. They point to the fact that the University offers only 57 of its own housing units for married student use, while the next lowest married-student housing provider among Big Eight schools is the University of Kansas, with 300 units.

They note that the Lincoln Housing Authority rents nearly half of the 1,350 units in its low income rent/lease program to student families, while nearly 400 welfare families remain on the waiting list for the rent subsidy program.

But the people who demand more University-built married-student housing consistently overlook several relevant points. It is questionable how much pressure married students actually put on Lincoln's low-income housing market.

While it is true that the University offers far less married-student housing than other Big Eight universities, it is also true that Lincoln is by far the biggest of all Big Eight cities. There is much more off-campus housing available in Lincoln than elsewhere in the conference.

It is true that married students are accommodated by the Lincoln Housing Authority before many other low-income families. But this is not due to prejudice on the part of LHA. It is due to the fact that 640 of the units now available to LHA are either efficiency or one-bedroom apartments. Only 350 units have three or more bedrooms. This lack of larger units is the problem behind the housing shortage now being experienced by welfare families. There is no serious shortage among small families and elderly couples.

A 1969 Department of Housing and Urban Development study isolates Lincoln's real problem. The federal report reveals that the construction of the city's multi-family units tends toward large projects offering many modern luxuries. Recent projects are mostly one and two-bedroom units renting at an average of about \$150 per month. Small, expensive units are not what large, poor families need.

Housing occupied by small married-student families is not what they need either. Unmarried students actually put more pressure on welfare families than married students. Many single students tired of UNL's box-like dormitories move off campus as soon as they are eligible. They sometimes team up in groups of four or five and rent a large house, a house equally suitable for a welfare family. The five single students can chip in and pay more rent than a welfare mother with four small children.

The Regents' subcommittee is not going to be able to relieve Lincoln of its housing problem by ordering more married-student housing built. If any part of the housing problem originates at the University, it originates in the ant-hill like dormitories. Since the University can't afford to tear down the dormitories and build private town houses where students can live their own lives, there appears to be little the University can do about Lincoln's housing problem.

Responsibility for solving the problem belongs to the city. Lincoln is just about to start construction of 120 city-owned units of the badly-needed three to five-bedroom type. The units will be administered by the Lincoln Housing Authority under its rent subsidy program.

The city appears to be finally recognizing its problem and its responsibility. Hopefully the Lincoln Housing Authority will become an organization able to deal effectively with the housing problems of Lincoln's low-income families.

Steve Strasser



"Tape! Glue! And all of my horses and all of my men."



Joseph Blatchford

Year for ACTION

GUEST Opinion

Joseph H. Blatchford is director of ACTION, the federal government's community service agency.

"University Year for ACTION" is the government's latest and potentially broadest-response to the hundreds of thousands of young people now ready and eager to make their lives count for something.

This fall, approximately 500 students from 11 universities and colleges will enroll in school and then, without reporting for classes, set to work on the problems of poverty in nearby communities. How many more do so next year is up to students, faculties, and administrators of our other colleges and universities.

We believe many more should. For, by joining "University Year for ACTION," universities can loosen their embrace on their students, tear down the walls that keep the students in and the greater world out, and break the isolation which has estranged so many campuses from the broader community in recent years.

"University Year for

ACTION" will enable medical students from the University of Nebraska to deliver health services to migrant laborers, business majors from Pepperdine College to help black owned and operated businesses succeed in Watts, and education students from the University of Colorado to help Indians in South Dakota develop their own unique educational system.

But beyond "University Year for ACTION" are other initiatives which must be considered if we are to provide young people with the equipment to make our world a more fit place in which to live.

We must start now to expand the capability of our schools to train young people for community service separate from their full-time careers. With the advent of the four-day week, the extended vacation and the secure retirement, citizens are in a position to seek ways to put their new-found leisure time to better use. If our schools have prepared them for a second career in service, our Nation's untapped talent could then be unleashed.

We are in need of men and women to provide supplemental health delivery services, to work in parole and probation work, to build parks, monitor air and water, plant trees...even to get the trash off the streets.

Because many of these problem areas require specialized training, our schools must take the initiative in structuring classwork to provide training for part-time service after graduation.

But the young of any generation have always sought to identify with the most noble aspirations of their society. What youth today is questioning is the credibility of values which lead to the pollution of our environment, the imprisonment of our poor in ghettos and the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty.

The solutions to these problems are being sought in Washington, on campuses and in local communities all over America. But more must be done to involve the young in these solutions. "University Year for ACTION" is an important step in encouraging that involvement.