

SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

Oct 24 3 43 PM '63

523 South Main Street
Seattle, Washington 98104

October 23, 1963

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2 Seattle City Council
3 Seattle Municipal Building
4 Seattle, Washington 98104

5 Dear Council Members:

6 We convey by this letter our position concerning the
7 housing ordinance proposed by the Human Rights Commission pursuant
8 to the mandate of the City Council.

9 We are in complete sympathy with the demand of Negroes
10 for legal and social justice. Failure to achieve and accord
11 equality in housing, education, voting and use of public accom-
12 modations is a record of which no American can be proud. There
13 is no question that denial of human dignity and self respect has
14 a corrosive effect upon the individual, creating problems
15 affecting public order and community harmony.

16 The proposed housing ordinance is intended to accord
17 equality in housing and by law imposes sanctions against acts of
18 discrimination on the part of owners and businesses dealing in
19 housing.

20 Considerations of the national origin of our membership
21 aside, the economic effects of this ordinance, particularly upon
22 owners and operators of rental housing accommodations, are very
23 real and substantial. We believe it is hypocritical and
24 unrealistic not to recognize that there will be serious risk of
25 loss and hardship because of the long-standing patterns of feeling,
26 attitudes and behavior on matters of race, particularly with
27 respect to the Negro.

28 Our membership has rental accommodations which are
29 occupied exclusively by Negroes and those which are occupied
30 exclusively by persons of other national origins and races. This
31 pattern of occupancy is dictated not by the operator, but by the
32 choice exercised by the tenants. Time and time again, operators
33 have been exposed to agitation, threats and coercion, precipitated

Seattle City Council
Page 2
October 23, 1963

1 by rental of accommodations which until then was exclusively
2 non-Negro. Tenants who have been previously peaceful, minded
3 their own business, and generally ignored each other, suddenly
4 make demands upon management and agitate among each other
5 concerning the operational policies of the premises. The owner
6 or operator must give the consideration to the requirement of
7 meeting his mortgage payments and operating costs, otherwise he
8 is jeopardizing his economic survival.

9 It is unjust to ignore this problem. It is cynical to
10 dismiss it by saying that somebody must bear the responsibility
11 and pay the cost or to demonstrate and "hit them in the pocketbook
12 where it hurts."

13 Cafes, theaters, and other places of public accommodation
14 have summary rights of control over the conduct of their patrons.
15 But the apartment owner or operator is restricted by the law of
16 landlord and tenant to evict them for unruly conduct, be they
17 Negro or non-Negro. Such proceedings must go through court and
18 involve heavy expense as well as 30 days or more of time.

19 It is our view that the solution is a responsibility of
20 the total community. In order to prevent unjust and undue hard-
21 ship, the housing ordinance must be comprehensive and strong.
22 It should be implemented with sufficient appropriation of funds
23 for the Human Rights Commission. It should accord landlords and
24 owners the right to file a complaint before the Human Rights
25 Commission and be given all of the relief that could be provided
26 by administrative action under this ordinance. Additional relief
27 should be provided by way of cease and desist, restrainer or
28 injunctive orders, but unfortunately it is our understanding that
29 our City Charter does not authorize such relief by way of
30 ordinance.

31 A forthright declaration of public policy by a strong
32 ordinance is only a part of the solution. There must be a genuine

Seattle City Council
Page 3
October 23, 1963

1 will on the part of responsible persons in government, business,
2 industry, and every national, racial, economic and religious
3 group in our community to implement the ordinance with under-
4 standing and desire to make it meaningful, workable and effective.
5 Every citizen should be invited to re-examine long standing
6 social distance, hostility, fear and ignorance.

7 We urge, therefore, inclusion of language including
8 neighbors or tenants in the section labeled "Unfair Housing
9 Practices Forbidden." This we do not believe to be clear in the
10 present draft.

11 We are against "watering" the ordinance because it
12 only evades the issue raised by demonstrations in our city and
13 throughout our country. Furthermore, such a device will only
14 cause disillusionment and bitterness tending to further disorder
15 or even violence, a price in terms of money, human lives and
16 public peace too high to pay.

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18 SEATTLE JAPANESE HOTEL & APARTMENT ASSOCIATION

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20 By H. T. Kobota
21 H. T. Kobota, President
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