STATEMENT OF SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) ON AMENDMENT TO STRIKE PUBLIC HOUSING SECTION FROM S. 57 ON SENATE FLOOR, FEBRUARY 7, 1959.

MR. PRESIDENT:

I am opposed to the public housing and urban renewal provisions of this bill.

I am informed that by the end of fiscal year 1960, more than 475,000 federally aided public housing units will be occupied by more than 2,000,000 people, and, in addition, 110,000 units which are now authorized will be under contract but not occupied.

It is estimated by the public housing authority that there is an annual turnover of 30 per cent of the tenants in public housing. This means, Mr. President, that, from units built and to be built without any additional legislation, there will be available approximately 180,000 units for occupancy by new tenants annually.

A study of this bill, which I admit is somewhat difficult under the circumstances under which we consider it today, will reveal that no longer is the purpose of this program to provide low-rent housing for people who cannot afford adequate housing built from private sources. The original purpose of the bill has long since lapsed into oblivion. I am informed that the Public Housing Administration authorizes the construction of units at a maximum cost of up to $17,000 per unit. Although income requirements for tenancy in public housing have been most loosely administered in the past, this bill abolishes all pretense at providing housing solely for low-income tenants. It repeals the requirement for eviction of over-income tenants. It gives the housing authorities complete discretion in setting rents and income.

Mr. President, the continued extensions and degenerations of the public housing activities of the United States Government cause me to wonder whether we are adhering in principle to Article VI of the Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which reads as follows:

"Article 6. The land, its mineral wealth, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, communications, large state-organized
agricultural enterprises (state farms, machine and tractor stations and the like), as well as municipal enterprises and the bulk of the dwelling houses in the cities and industrial localities, are state property, that is, belong to the whole people."

Mr. President, our humanitarian instinct comprises one of our strongest national traits. I am motivated by as strong a humanitarian instinct as anyone in our country. I have real concern for those who are in dire economic circumstances and without decent and suitable living quarters. However, it is our very humanitarianism, admirable and worthy though it be, on which the complacency of the American people is founded. By using a subtle, sometimes even subliminal approach, our enemies have enlisted our unthinking support of causes apparently for the promotion of "human rights," but which, when carefully examined, reveal an underlying advancement of collectivism, which is the gravest threat to our country today. We find ourselves even more vulnerable to plans for promoting the economic welfare of all, or a particular portion of our people, at the instance of government. We are inclined to direct our exclusive attention to the purportedly noble purpose of the plan, but to ignore the threatened jeopardy to our individual liberty and the impracticality of utilizing the tool of government, in lieu of personal and private initiative.

No program, no decision, no action, proposed to be undertaken by the Federal Government, should be free from the most careful scrutiny and logical judgment of each and every American citizen. Individual liberty and practicality must be weighed against not only the purported material benefit, but also against the practically probable benefits. Nothing should be accepted at face value, for only by laying aside emotional impulses and submitting each matter to a logical and objective analysis, can we avoid the pitfalls of collectivism.

After careful personal analysis of the public housing provisions of S. 57, I can only see in this proposal a further involvement of our Government into private enterprise activities, an increased national debt, and another smashing victory for the
insidious forces of Socialism. In fact, Mr. President, the public housing program further proves the point/that Socialism is an inefficient and impractical philosophy. I can see no excuse for its continuation.

Private enterprise has also been tested in this country. Unlike Socialism, however, it has proved itself by giving to our country/a standard of living/which, at its lowest ebb, is far superior to any other known to the world. Private enterprise can do/and is doing/the housing job/at no cost to the taxpayer. I do not believe that the Government should be in the housing business/or any other business/unless two conditions are fully met. First, the project must be something that is vitally needed. As I have pointed out, almost 600,000 units will be in existence without any further legislation on the subject, and this will accommodate approximately 180,000 family units annually. The second condition for the Government to get into business/is that private enterprise is not willing to do the job. In this instance/private enterprise is doing the job. We are undergoing at present/a private housing boom. There is no slack in the building program. One but needs to examine the classified ads under real estate in any newspaper/to see that, not only new housing is available, but that there is also a surplus of adequate existing housing/available at low cost.

The question of cost to the taxpayer/is also extremely pertinent on this issue. There is involved in this bill/a revival of about 10,000 units/for which authority expired in June of 1958/and an extension of the 35,000 units/authorized for the current fiscal year until June of 1961/and an additional increment of 35,000 new units/which will be open until 1 July 1963. This is an unjustifiable splurge on an unworkable program. The cost of the subsidies for these units/will be astronomical. It is an insult/to the already over-burdened American taxpayer/and adds further to the debt obligations/which his children will bear for years to come.

Now, Mr. President, as to urban renewal, there are so many
bad features of this program that they almost defy enumeration. It is unconscionable in its entirety. There are several features, however, which are even more objectionable than the usual undesirables included in this program. For instance, this bill would repeal the existing one billion-dollar ceiling on borrowings from the Treasury and would substitute no ceiling whatsoever.

It raises from 10 to 20 per cent of the total, capital grants that may be used for non-residential developments. It increases the federal proportion by diminishing the local share through application against the one-third local share of public works completed as much as five years prior to the authorization of the contract by the Housing Administrator.

Considering the fact that $1,350,000,000 is already authorized for urban renewal grants, the authorization of $2,100,000,000 additional in new grants reflects, to say the least, a total unconcern for the financial condition of the United States Government and its citizen taxpayers.

Mr. President, I intend to vote against this bill; it should be defeated.

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