

CAMBRIDGE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.

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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

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January 31, 1976

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Honorable Members of the Cambridge City Council:

RE: MORE RENT CONTROL MATTERS

Enclosed you will please find a copy of a speech which I recently delivered before the Economy Club on the subject of rent controls. It speaks for itself quite clearly.

On behalf of my Association and BEFORE any more steps are taken pro or con on the matter of rent controls, I hereby request that you authorize the taking of a factual survey, by an outside professional firm, which will cover the entire City of Cambridge, so that a determination may be made of whatever the facts may be concerning the need of or dropping of rent controls. Any move in any direction without the factual survey being made, would clearly indicate that such move is made for purely political motives, and NOT in the best interests of all of the citizens of the City of Cambridge.

If such a survey, properly taken, and identifying by income those who need financial assistance from within the City, now, should, by all means have it. If such a need does not exist, then rent controls would not be needed.

In other words, regardless of whether anyone is for or against rent controls, there can be no question about the wisdom of your authorizing that the survey be made, as well as your taking the necessary steps to provide for the funds to do so.

It would be criminally negligent to force a decision without proper knowledge. I have asked for this survey every year for 6 years, and have had some "lip-service," but no action. In other words, if people really need help, I agree that they should receive it. If they do not need help, then I see no reason why the City of Cambridge should be victimized, torn apart, and abused for a non-existing cause. Since I feel certain that none of the members of the Cambridge City Council would "play politics" on such a serious matter, so vital to the entire community, that I trust that all nine members will support this position on rent controls. In other words, I assume that it is time to rid ourselves of emotionalism, and act in the best interests of all, based upon the facts and the truth.

Sincerely,

Carl F. Barron

WHAT HOUSING SHORTAGE?
WHAT HOUSING EMERGENCY?

For almost 6 years, the City of Cambridge has been the victim of misguided good intentions, inexperience, political ambitions and stupidity. This was a period of violence, anti-Establishmentism, hypocrisy and, often, a push for change, whether good or bad. Here, in Cambridge, one of the forms it took was a claim of an acute Housing Shortage, particularly for the elderly and low-income. Local politicians often fanned the demand; local activist groups, small, but highly vocal, seized upon a golden opportunity to attack the Establishment - in Cambridge, - mostly small, long-term and older property owners. The method was a FALSE CLAIM of a HOUSING SHORTAGE. The result - Over 3000 new, low-income subsidized housing units built and still coming into the housing supply per the turnkey handover by MIT of many units during January 1976. HOUSING SHORTAGE? EMERGENCY? Who occupies these new housing units? MOSTLY people from OUTSIDE Cambridge; who find it easy pickings here. Why? because we're suckers in this city - destroying, or permitting ourselves to be destroyed, by false prophets who act in the guise of humanity and concern.

Recently, a poll taken in the Rindge Towers, totalling 774 units, and built within the past 6 years, showed approximately 2 out of every 3 apartments occupied by people who NEVER LIVED IN CAMBRIDGE BEFORE THEY MOVED into the Rindge Towers. So many vacancies existed there, a short time ago, that real estate brokers were being contacted to help rent the premises on a paid fee basis.

The Interfaith Housing Units at 25 Walden St. had to advertise, over and over again, in the Boston GLOBE, in attempts to rent, NEW subsidized HOUSING UNITS. Again, outsiders had to be imported into Cambridge to fill subsidized housing.

Mr. George Yuse, Director of Placement for the Cambridge Housing Authority, was interviewed by Anne Kirchheimer, a reporter from the Boston Globe, and the printed story clearly conveys the huge demand by outsiders for Cambridge subsi-

dized housing. As a matter of fact, Mr. Yuse made special reference to a family from as far away as Bogota, Colombia, amongst the applicants.

If the demand by CAMBRIDGE PERMANENT RESIDENTS is insufficient to fill up existing housing, then there IS NO HOUSING SHORTAGE and, NO HOUSING EMERGENCY! AND NO NEED FOR FURTHER restrictions on free enterprise which is needed to invest private money in more housing in this city.

Recognizing both the falsity of the claims of a local housing shortage, but, at the same time, desiring a gradual return to normal free markets, a compromise was attempted by introducing the concept of retaining rent controls, but decontrolling apartments as voluntarily vacated. This was done both in the State Legislature and the Cambridge City Council. An immediate opposition arose by those who wish to perpetuate Rent Controls in its present harsh form, Chapter 842 of the Acts of 1970, in an "All or Nothing" drive. WHY? (incidentally I have heard comments about fear of decontrol because some tenants might be harassed into vacating. There are clear state laws on the matter of harassment, and I find it most peculiar that there should be any fear of distrust in the fairness of our judicial system.) WHY should single family home-owners, the owners of 2-3 family, owner-occupied buildings, business firms, and long-term residents, the permanent body and strength of Cambridge, be forced to pay part of the rent each month for transient people, often from out of the state and even from outside of this country? Why shouldn't they pay an open market rent when they voluntarily move into this City? Why should the City be forced to give tax abatements on properties that could produce a higher income from financially well-to-do transients who consider themselves lucky and Cambridge citizens stupid? Why should our tax rate climb as high as it has if we could broaden our tax base by new private investments in housing in a city that has largely over 60-70 year old housing? Why should the City Council liberals be so anxious to perpetuate a system of

RENT CONTROLS which has proven to be so poorly administered that it is referred to on state and federal levels as the epitome of inefficiency and unfairness? Why has any City Councillor dared to press for any form of Rent Controls without an authoritative, competent and impartial survey of the housing needs of this City? Good politics? Good judgment? Incidentally, in respect to the lack of a Cambridge survey, which I have urged the City Council to have made since 1969, I sincerely hope that none of them will quote the recent Harbridge House Report which was supplied so much incorrect data by Urban Planning Aid, a Cambridge organization largely consisting of young transients, who received, and, still do, the sum of \$20,000 per month of Federal Funds, and who have travelled all over this state and the United States, promoting their own brand of destructive liberalism. If there really is a need for low-cost housing in Cambridge for the elderly and low-income housing in Cambridge, or even the State, why doesn't the City Council ask for enabling legislation to float a bond issue to subsidize at everyone's expense the money that some Councillors claim is needed to subsidize low incomes? Because a person has a relatively small income does that give him or her a right to expect another private individual to pay part of his rent by limits on rent? If needed, there are ways of helping on a fair and equitable basis, without taking, destroying, and then boasting of the kindness done.

Tenant groups and some City Councillors have spoken against decontrol because it would, in time, eliminate rent controls. What's wrong with that? If there is no shortage, and people voluntarily leave one residence, why should they expect another private individual to be a permanent charitable organization? Why should the institution of free enterprise be permanently ^{restored} ~~retained~~ instead of a gradual and painless phase out? Or is it a yen for power and destructive liberalism?

The time has come for a sober and realistic assessment of the entire subject of rent controls. I strongly oppose them, as I have for many years, and I feel that an honest compromise is rent controls with vacancy decontrol, fast decisions by the Rent Board, and pass through of uncontrollable expenses, such as taxes, energy, etc.

4. 15-49
Comm. from Cambridge Property Owners Assoc.,
Inc. relative to the subject of Rent Control

In City Council,
Feb. 9, 1976

2/9/76
Referred to the
Committee Meeting
on 2/10/76 at 7 PM