

June 4, 1969

Gentlemen:

I want to pass on to you some thoughts on the subject of rent control.

I see two basic issues: one, the rent-income ratio; and two, tenant power.

THE RENT-INCOME RATIO: If a family pays up to one week's income for a month's rent, heat, and utilities, the family is reasonably comfortable. If they pay between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{3}$ of their income on these, they are ~~for~~ under pressure; if they pay more than $\frac{1}{3}$, they are forced to revolt one way or another. My experience in Dorchester is that welfare families are in the revolt zone. It is interesting to note that in Communist China according to last Sunday's Times Magazine, the poorest families are in the $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{3}$ zone and not in the revolt zone. It looks as if we have some catching up to do.

At the same time, though my rent here is exorbitant, \$310, it is still less than our combined week's income for four of us. It may be that owners should make a little extra off of us so that they can charge less to poor people.

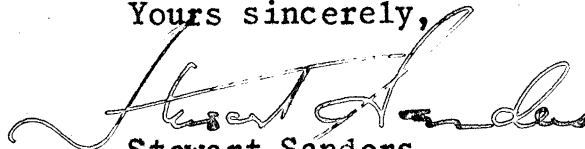
In any case, I think we should commit ourselves to keeping everyone out of the danger and revolt zone.

TENANT POWER: Despite what President Nixon and big business men dream about a home for everyone, many of us may never own our own homes, and we still want to feel like full citizens. In an urban society, it doesn't make much sense for each man to try to have his own little house and plot of ground. But if we are going to try to cooperate and live together in big housing developments, we are going to need some of the opportunity to assert ourselves and make decisions regarding our housing just the same. I don't think we have to give it all up just because we have chosen to live with others.

There are various possible vehicles for tenant participation and power now being developed. It is essential to see the importance of them and commit ourselves to allowing them or helping them develop. I am thinking of tenant associations and tenant unions, also of tenant stock ownership plans.

The objective is that I as a tenant need to feel that I have some say in matters concerning charges, structure, and services. I see the need to institutionalize this say into a standard procedure for apartment tenants.

Yours sincerely,



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Order 139

Communication from Stewart Sanders,
18 Frost St., Cambridge relative to
the subject of rent control

June 9, 1969

Placed on File

Copies to ALL COUNCILLORS

George