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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.



**Cambridge Rent Control Coalition**

576-1006

August 23, 1983

Cambridge City Council  
City Hall  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

To the Honorable; the City Council:

The City Manager's selection of Linda Prosnitz as tenant representative on the Cambridge Rent Control Board signals the end of the era in which the Rent Board supposedly served to carry out the mandate and purpose of the rent control law: the preservation of affordable housing for the city's low and moderate income tenants. In its stead, the city now has one more professional agency dedicated to the upgrading of the city's housing stock. Like the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation formed earlier this year, the Rent Board is following the path in which housing policies are designed to preserve buildings at the expense of protecting people of low and moderate income.

Mr. Healy's reasons for choosing Ms. Prosnitz make clear the direction of city housing policy: "'The emphasis (of the board) has always been affordability,' Healy said. 'What is now important is to preserve the housing stock. That's where I'm coming from on this one.'" (Cambridge Chronicle, August 18, 1983).

In making the appointment, the City Manager chose not to place Nancy Hall, the CRCC's candidate, on the board. In the past, neither Mr. Healy nor his predecessor had any difficulty in accepting the candidate put forward by the city's tenants' groups for the tenant representative slot. What's different about Nancy? Her background is that of tenant activist, not agency professional; she is also much more a working-class candidate than previous, uncontested nominees.

In making appointments to the Rent Board, like other

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appointed boards in the city, the city managers have virtually excluded working-class and minority people. Instead, the city has boards comprised of professionals designing policies which are aggravating the trend whereby only professionals can afford to live in the city.

When Mr. Healy objected to Ms. Hall's candidacy, he simply changed the rules by which members to the board were chosen. Thus, the manager's appointment of Ms. Prosnitz raises serious procedural questions. What procedures, if any, does the manager follow in making appointments to the city's boards and agencies? From our experience it appears the answer is none.

To reverse an unfortunate trend in city affairs, the CRCC requests that the City Council press the manager, to the full extent allowed under the city charter, to take the following steps:

- 1) Place more working class, minority, and low-income people on the city's boards and agencies.
- 2) Publish appointment guidelines which will broaden board representation and accomplish step 1).
- 3) Act immediately to limit terms of Rent Control Board members to no more than three years (a recommendation of the Mayor's Commission on Rent Control).

Very truly yours,



Michael H. Turk  
(Cambridge Rent Control  
Coalition)

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A-132

Comm. from Michael H. Turk, Cambridge Rent Control Coalition Re: appointment of Linda Prosnitz as Tenant Representative to the Cambridge Rent Control Board.

In City Council,

September 12, 1983

9/12/83

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File