

2005

Columbia Univ -
Housing

INTERVIEWS: RFE

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March 24, 1947

Columbia University Urban Land Use and Housing
E. M. Fisher

E. M. Fisher, who made the 1931-32 housing survey for SS and recommended Ratcliff for repeat survey in 1945 when Fisher's ABA connection made Fisher himself unavailable, came in to report Columbia developments of possible RF interest later. F went to Columbia because he felt only a large university could man and conduct the research needed on basic problems of urban land use and housing. At F's instance, Fackenthal in 1946 appointed an exploratory committee consisting of Fisher, F. C. Mills, A. F. Burns, Merton, Calkins (now Orchard), Eastwood of the Business School, Howell of the Law School, Miller of the Architectural School, and Millet of the Institute of Public Administration. Several meetings developed extensive common interests and a report to the President recommended the establishment at Columbia of an Institute of Land Use and Housing Studies. All principals are fully occupied so need machinery and staff they could advise, supervise, and direct on problems of mutual interest. Typical major problems and needs to which they might give priority include:

- (1) Study of public housing - U. S. vs England.
- (2) Study and appraisal of existing housing statistical series, and construction statistical series.
- (3) Integration of construction programs.
- (4) Study of management problems of large-scale housing projects. On this, public authorities have done some work, but recent huge private developments reveal virtual unpreparedness for dealing with major problems, e.g., non-discrimination as required by law where state aid or benefits are invoked, or as demanded by pressure groups from purely private ventures as of life insurance companies.

Confidentially, the Columbia activity has been given sharp impetus by the housing problems of Columbia's immediate environment, 110th-125th Streets and Morningside Drive to the Hudson River, involving accommodations for about 15,000 families. Deterioration in this area has become so acute and such a social threat that, on recommendation of the above Committee, there has been formed spontaneously a Morningside Heights Organization, Inc. by 15 affected institutions including Columbia, the Cathedral and 2 Catholic churches, International House, St. Luke's and Womens Hospitals, Julliard School of Music, etc. A combined research and action program recommended by the Committee has been adopted unanimously by the institutions concerned, with \$100,000 stock subscribed to complete within the next year studies on which action may be based.

EMF understands that SS housing interest is relatively new and necessarily limited, and also understands the propriety of prior clearance with Haig's Columbia Council, and new SSRC Committee of which EMF is a member. That done, RFE indicated SS willingness to look at their ultimate proposal, but without prior commitment.

EMF says Coleman Woodbury is leaving Wisconsin, as of April 1 to again become Executive Director of the National Association of Housing Officials.

RFE

3/24/47

R.F.B.

RFE:MK

*See RFE letter to Ratcliff 3/24/47.