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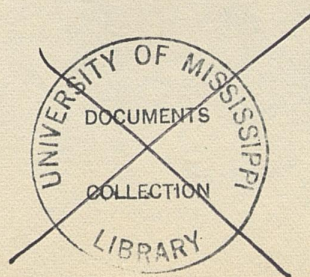
RELEASE NO. 381

FOR RELEASE AS INDICATED

The attached remarks will be made by Nathan Straus, Administrator of the United States Housing Authority, at approximately 3 P. M., EST., Wednesday, September 13, on the grounds of the Reading (Pennsylvania) County Fair, while participating in the "Public Housing Day" of the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of the Fair.

For release to the afternoon papers of September 13.

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This fair has been a revelation to me. Never in all my life have I seen such outstanding farm products as are gathered here this week.

I say this as one who has spent an important part of his life working shoulder to shoulder with farmers. In the 1920's, when I was a member of the New York State Senate, I served as Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture. During that period, and many times since then, I saw hundreds of farm horses, innumerable flocks of cattle, and carload upon carload of vegetables, fruits and dairy products. But never before have I had the pleasure of admiring such splendid horses, such sturdy cattle, such excellent vegetables, fruits and dairy products, as I have seen here today. My heartiest congratulations to the officials of the Reading Fair and to the farmers of Berks County!

Fairs like this one play an important role in our national life. If there is anything that our country needs at this critical point in world history, it is national unity: unity between labor and capital, unity between government and industry, and last but not least, unity between our farm population and our city dwellers. But, unfortunately, most city dwellers see no farther than their noses. They live in a limited little world that is bounded on one side by the skyscraper and on the other side by the factory. True, they may eat eggs and drink cream in their coffee every day in the week. Yet they have no conception of the difference between a white Leghorn chicken and a Rhode Island Red. They could not tell a Holstein from a Guernsey. People used to talk about "city slickers." The truth of the matter is that we have too many "big city hicks."

At a fair like this the activities of the farmer are vividly dramatized. Your exhibits are a valuable object lesson for the business man, the industrial laborer

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and the white collar worker. After spending a day at the fair even the most hopeless of our "big city hicks" could not help but learn something about farm life, could not help but appreciate the fact that the farmer is the backbone of our national economy.

But the farmer can also learn something from our cities. Here in the city of Reading, for instance, a new program of social betterment is getting under way -- a program of great significance for every farmer, every farm laborer, every rural family in Berks County. I refer to the slum clearance and low-rent public housing program that is now being developed by the Reading Housing Authority with the assistance of the United States Housing Authority.

I am sure that many of you are asking yourselves "What is this low-rent public housing program?"

Well, those of you who want a complete and thorough answer to this question should speak to Mr. James E. Mast, Chairman of the Reading Housing Authority or other members of the Authority. It is they who have the responsibility of developing the low-rent public housing program in Reading and it is they who know the most about the housing project that will soon be built here. The national low-rent housing and slum clearance program you see, is a decentralized program. All that the United States Housing Authority does is supply financial aid. The local housing authority studies the need for slum clearance and new low-rent housing and decides where to build and what to build.

At one of the booths here at the Fair you will find an exhibit which portrays the work being done by local housing authorities with the aid of the USHA. On the left you will see a group of dilapidated slum dwellings, on the right an



attractive housing project with plentiful open space around each building and a wading pool for children. But by the time of next year's Fair you will not have to look at an exhibit to find out what is being done under the low-rent public housing program. By that time the Reading Housing Authority's "Glenside" housing project at Schuylkill Avenue a few blocks from Baer Park will be near completion. About 400 families of low-income who are now living in unhealthy, unsafe or overcrowded dwellings will be getting ready to move into the clean, healthy fire-proof homes provided in the Glenside project.

For the people of Reading this project will be a permanent civic asset. By rehousing families who could not otherwise afford to live in good houses and well-planned neighborhoods, the project will mean higher health standards and higher citizenship standards. By reducing the high cost of fire, police and health services in substandard housing areas, it will help reduce city and county expenditures. By putting hundreds of men to work at construction and at supplying building materials, it will help cut the relief rolls.

And what about the farmers and the rural population of Berks County? Will the Reading Housing Authority's project be of any benefit to them?

Yes, it will unquestionably benefit the rural and farm families of the County.

First of all, the economic savings on the cost of fire, police and health protection are savings that will be shared by everyone in the County, whether he live in the town or city. And the employment of hundreds of construction workers in Reading at prevailing wages will mean more and better customers for the milk and eggs and vegetables produced on the farm.



Second, and perhaps even more important, the low-rent housing projects that are now being built in scores of our cities throughout the country are part of a program that is already being extended to our rural and farming areas.

There are some people, of course, who think that substandard housing is limited to our big cities and that therefore a low-rent public housing program would naturally be limited to our big cities. Nothing could be farther from the truth! The housing problem in small towns and villages is every bit as serious as in the larger cities. Although the small town may not be troubled by the existence of large, overcrowded tenement areas such as we have in New York City or Philadelphia, it usually suffers from an acute shortage of good, low-cost and from an abundance of outworn, dilapidated shacks and shanties. Moreover, the housing problem of the American farmer is even more serious than the housing problem in our cities. Let me quote you a few figures that speak for themselves. In 1934 the Department of Agriculture surveyed the condition of more than half a million farmhouses throughout the country. One out of every four of these farmhouses had faulty foundations and bad roofs. Four out of five had neither running water nor electricity.

Although the USHA program is less than two years old, interest in the program on the part of small communities and rural areas has been growing rapidly. A large number of housing authorities have already been set up in small towns and counties. More than 25 loans have already been approved for housing authorities in communities under 25,000 population. In addition, plans are under way for the construction of separate homes for low-income farmers. Senate Bill 591, for instance, which has already passed the Senate and will be on the House calendar when the next regular session of Congress is convened, would authorize the USHA to lend an additional \$800,000,000 for low-rent housing, would guarantee that at least \$200,000,000 be used in farm areas.



Accordingly, county housing authorities are being set up in many farming regions for the express purpose of building well-equipped, modern homes for farmers of low income. In fact, even before Congress acts upon this pending legislation, there is a small amount of funds available for farmers' housing and in a number of wide-awake farm areas county housing authorities are being set up at this very moment and applications for funds are being prepared.

For many months now the United States Housing Authority and the Department of Agriculture have been working together at developing a housing program to meet the needs of the low-income farmer. Although this program is still in its infancy, it has tremendous potentialities. A farm housing program will bring new joy and new happiness to life in the countryside. Just as 20th century machinery has already, to a large degree, been brought to the farm itself, the USHA program will bring 20th century living standards to the farm house. Moreover, it should provide a new bond between the industrial worker and the farmer.

A housing program that provides better homes for both low-income workers and low-income farmers should go a long way toward making it still clearer that the basic interests of worker and farmer are identical and toward helping achieve that national unity upon which the future of our democracy will largely depend.