

Learning Housing... From the Ground Up

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

"People who go into housing care about people."

"Housing managers are interested in people."

"People who become housing managers have to be tolerant."

"Not all housing managers are in it because they like people; some like money."

So say class members in the first professional housing management training program about the field they are in or hope to be in.

The class, which began in January and ends next week, is made up of private and public resident managers, maintenance

personnel, administrative assistants, community relations people and secretarial personnel, as well as tenant organization members.

Rochester Institute of Technology's extended services department and the Housing Council in Monroe County Area, Inc., sponsor the program to train management and maintenance personnel for residential complexes. Managers in the past have had to learn project managing on the job, which is "just about impossible," according to the woman responsible for the program.

Alma Greene has been in housing about 10 years. She began with the Department of Urban Renewal as director of

relocation and is now with the Housing Council.

After seeing the dismal fate of projects that were poorly managed, she decided specific training was needed for the growing number of people filling the new field.

"We don't expect to get people out of here able to manage 500-unit projects," Mrs. Greene said between classes at RIT's 50 W. Main St. building last week, "but we do expect them to have a fundamental knowledge so they don't have to start at the ground level."

Of the diverse makeup of the class, the class coordinator for RIT, Nan Carlton, said, "They have in common awareness of the trend toward more humane management in the public sector

as well as in the private sector, and of the individual need to act on that awareness."

Last Tuesday a second group began the training. There are two classes of 20 this session and the program has been funded by a \$12,000 grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, making possible 40 scholarships.

In a short orientation address to the first meeting of the second group, James M. Papero, assistant director of extended services at RIT, told the class "many things are included in the curriculum that may not seem to go along with housing, but they do. They are the people-sensitive part."

To one sitting in on the almost completed first course, it was obvious what he meant. A decision making and administration skills exercise was being conducted by Mrs. Jesse James, the director of RIT's urban extension division.

The point of the exercise, she explained, is to make people aware of their own values and how much they are ruled by them.

How you value yourself, how you trust yourself makes a difference in your value and trust for others, one class member concluded during the idea sharing time.

Besides the people-sensitizing part of the curriculum, pure management skills are taught as well as organization, maintenance procedures, and tenant legal rights. Instructors include college professors and professionals from the community.

Two women who manage privately owned apartments said they found the practical pointers

in accounting and management techniques as important as "dealing with people techniques."

Helen Klinkert, who has managed the 400-unit Ellison Park Apartments for six years and Audrey Biernbaum, manager of the 240-unit Richmond Park Apartments since 1970, also said the class interaction was most helpful. Through it they learned about the tenant organizations and availability of social service agencies that are part of public housing, two things they aren't familiar with in private projects.

Irene Burch is president of the tenant association at the 45-unit Luther Circle on South Plymouth.

She serves as liaison between the managing Rochester Housing Authority, and her fellow tenants, in working out decisions on discipline and selecting incoming tenants.

From the management training course she found out "a lot about agencies we can go to for help, like the building department and electric company, and about tenant legal rights, that I didn't know about."

Richard Perdue, who is secretary of Community Volunteers and a member of the tenant association in the organization's Martin Luther King project on Federal street, hopes to become a manager.

To him the financial aspects, the budgeting and general management skills were the most important part of the course.

Louise Cheatham of 174 Wilkins St., who took the course because she is interested in housing, said the knowledge she got from it made it possible for her to get action in favor of tenants in a couple of cases.



Bill Cicione [back to camera] discusses construction of the now complete Newfield house with Maynard Richardson, a founder of the first cooperative group.

Constructive Idea To Help Poor

By BARBARA MOYNEHAN

Who would guess America's cultural revolution would start with a construction company?

Well, one professor, a building designer, and a band of laborers hope it will.

A revolution is not accomplished through radical rhetoric and destruction, but through a positive plan and hard work, says the Cornell University professor involved in an effort to change America's industrial system to a democratically controlled one instead of one controlled by business.

Jaroslav Vanek is a specialist in systems of self-managed industrial democracy who was inspired to put his knowledge to work against the rural housing problem in Tompkins County by Pope John XXIII's encyclical on democratic economic participation — *Mater Et Magistra* (Church, Mother and Teacher).

Vanek came to America from Czechoslovakia in 1953. He earned a doctorate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, taught at Harvard for seven years and has been at Cornell's International Economics Department since 1964.

Two years ago with a few other professors, Vanek started the non-profit Organizing and Supportive Agency (OSA) to help the poor form a self-managed, democratically-run corporation.

To generate interest in their concept OSA first trained unskilled workers in the art of house construction. This is where Bill Cicione of Newfield, former BOCES teacher and member of Cornell's School of Industrial Labor Relations Department, joined the effort.

Training of about 28 unskilled workers, aged 21 to 39, took a year and a half and included designing a house they would build in Newfield as the first test of their newly acquired skills.

The house in Newfield is complete now, on the market for \$30,000, and the men are experienced home builders.

From that group of men, OSA got a smaller group of interested men to become members of a cooperative group who are still working on construction jobs in the Ithaca area.

"We learned a lot from this project," said Cicione — mainly, "you can't build low cost housing by conventional building methods."

Cicione has developed a self-help housing system designed for the rural poor, and says "the skill factor for conventional stick-built housing is too complex to train a large group. We're better off working with a more simplified method."

To Cicione, the only solution is to "think of new technology in housing, an alternative to trailers and subsidized housing but at the same low cost of about \$8,000, with the added attraction that it will be a real investment not like a trailer that will depreciate or subsidized housing you don't really own."

His plan is pre-fabricated, component parts, made in a controlled situation. What makes his house design unique is interlocking components which make it possible for a family to build its own home in any of 10 possible designs.

"This country was founded by people coming here and doing their own thing. Now you can't pound a nail without calling a carpenter," the builder said.

Listing the important things about the OSA project, Cicione said, "We have a group of guys who work," and are beginning a strong attempt to attack the rural housing problem by low cost do-it-yourself housing, besides giving the poor employment.

This summer OSA hopes to expand the cooperative group of workers, who will eventually move into large-scale production of the parts needed for the component homes, sharing the profits equally.

Cicione described himself as the "happy non-intellectual on the job who bridges the gap between the abstract and the worker." The catalyst in the project, the two men agreed, is the rapport of the worker with the intellectuals, who realize it has to be done the workers' way.

Vanek sees such democratically controlled industry as a trend that is becoming more and more significant around the world. The product of an economic system run for and by capital, according to the professor, is dehumanization which is turning people into machines, causing a moral crisis and is "extremely undemocratic control over men."

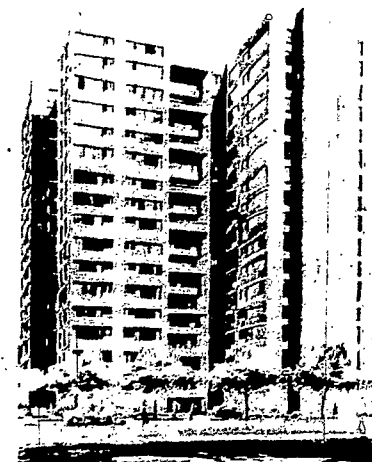
It was with the help of a U.S. Department of Labor's grant for \$24,000 that the construction training was given. Since then the group has received \$2,000 from the Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation and a promise of \$10,000 from the national Office of Human Development.

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