Housing

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Housing Effort By Tenants Succeeds, Fails

Housing is one of the most acute of all Negro problems, in Peoria as well as elsewhere. Here is the story of how two determined young men rebuilt and rehabilitated a blighted area despite frustration and opposition and how success was accompanied by failure. This is the seventh of eight articles on “The Negro in Peoria.”

By BILL CONVER

Attempts at slum clearance and housing improvement have a way of getting themselves thwarted. A prime example was an effort made in four square blocks of Richwoods Township immediately adjacent to Peoria during 1952, 1953 and 1954.

The effort was made by Negro tenants who lived in the four blocks bounded by California, Embert Pl., Boulevard and War Memorial Drive. It accomplished very little because Peoria and state housing authorities, after giving tentative approval seemingly lost interest toward the end of 1954.

MOVEMENT TO CLEAR the area and improve housing and general conditions there was promoted by two residents, Tony S. Rudd and James Bryant in 1952. Both live on Embert Pl.

Other residents of the area, especially those on the two blocks of W. Paris Ave. were asked if they would either agree to sell or agree to remodel and help with improvements such as paving the streets.

TWO FINANCE AGENCIES agreed to finance new homes in the area. Meetings and correspondence between the group and Peoria and state housing authorities at first held a note of encouragement.

However in 1953 a dispute over zoning with a commercial firm on War Memorial Drive, brought the movement to the attention of the public and it was erroneously reported that the area was nine blocks square.

Opposition to the plan of the Improvement Association which was incorporated and held its first meeting on Oct. 21, 1954, sprang up because residents in adjoining neighborhoods visualized the project as a government housing project such as Taff Homes.

ACTUALLY THAT WAS not the idea at all, but it was simply an attempt to provide better homes for the people in the four square blocks and a better environment for those wishing to purchase lots in the area.

The War Memorial Drive Improvement Association

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