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THE WORK OF CLARENCE S. STEIN

1919 - 1939

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of History

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Prudence Anne Phillimore

1977

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ABSTRACT	iv
INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER I STEIN'S EARLY LIFE AND THE INFLUENCES ON HIS WORK	10
CHAPTER II STEIN'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN HOUSING LEGISLATION IN NEW YORK STATE..	37
CHAPTER III REGIONAL PLANNING: AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION TO THE HOUSING PROBLEM	64
CHAPTER IV THE NEW DEAL: PROGRESS AND COMPROMISE OF STEIN'S HOUSING AND REGIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES	100
CONCLUSION	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY	155

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is the work of Clarence S. Stein (1882-), architect and town planner. It concentrates on the years 1919 to 1939 because it was in this period that Stein formulated most of his technical and political ideas, and in practice carried out his most innovative work. Also, it was during these years that the national government established a permanent housing policy as opposed to the exceptional but temporary measures it adopted in the world wars.

The major line of investigation in this study concerns an analysis of Stein's methods, ideals, and achievements in the context of the development of solutions to urban problems and his role in the evolution of government intervention in housing and planning. To establish Stein's place it has been necessary to examine briefly the background of housing and planning both in theory and practice before 1919, and to compare and contrast Stein's work with that of his contemporaries.

Stein devoted his whole career to the goal of establishing housing as a basic function of government. In New York, under Governor Alfred E. Smith, Stein proposed radical plans for government housing but achieved only partial success in their implementation. The New Deal housing programme was based on his conservative progress in New York and remained a compromise of Stein's ideals. The fate of Stein's housing plans at the hands of Al Smith and Franklin D. Roosevelt raises the question as to how far their administrations were politically, rather than ideologically motivated.

An analysis of Stein's work and methods also serves to challenge the traditional view of the 1920s as an era of unopposed private enterprise. Stein was working from an antithetical tradition of co-operation, public service, and government interventionism, which, together with New York social reformers, he carried through from the Progressive era into the New Deal. Although the strength of the tradition of privatism modified many of his plans, Stein made significant headway with government housing in the 1920s. His work, with that of his colleagues, points to the existence of a constant conflict and shifting political balance between laissez-faire liberalism and welfare-state liberalism in the early part of the century.

Thus, although the focus of this paper is on Stein and how his work contributed to the solution of housing problems and the development of regional planning, this inevitably reflects on both social and political questions of wider import, as housing was a vital issue to both spheres of interest.

THE WORK OF CLARENCE S. STEIN

1919 - 1939

INTRODUCTION

By 1920 the lack of adequate housing for at least one third of the American population had become an increasingly pressing problem that could no longer be ignored. In the Progressive era the accepted nineteenth century view of poverty as the product of individual immorality had begun to lose currency and increasing emphasis was put on the environment as the force that shaped both the individual and society. Although there was agreement on the existence of the housing problem and the importance of its solution, there were sharp divisions in the means considered for its amelioration.

The mid-nineteenth century saw the growth of concern among various technicians, health officials, and social workers over urban problems. However, because of the lack of importance then attributed to environmental factors, their solutions were largely isolated, localised, and ineffective. At the turn of the century, when the problem became widely recognised, solutions began to fall into the confines of two opposing categories. Lawrence Veiller, author of the 1901 Tenement House Law, was representative of one category in his espousal of the traditional nineteenth century view that unhindered private enterprise could and should be allowed to solve the problem. In the other category fell those like

Clarence Stein, who maintained that the housing crisis of the war years was the product of unrestrained capitalism. Thus, the latter group considered it the duty of government to intervene, in some capacity, and control the market in this field.

Both sides saw poor housing and bad living conditions as a threat to social stability and political democracy. Their differing interpretations of democracy dictated their opposing solutions to the housing problem. For the supporters of private enterprise, democracy meant the total freedom of the individual to compete in a laissez-faire economy. Thus, they maintained that government intervention, especially in the sphere of housing and land-use, was a threat both to private property and individual liberty. If government was to play any role in housing it must be through incentives to builders to increase production and therefore competition. On the other side, democracy was interpreted as every individual's right to the basic necessities of life, such as housing, of which he had been deprived through a wasteful, individualistic profit economy. It was therefore the function of government to provide, or help provide, this basic necessity. Through an examination of Stein's work I hope to demonstrate the existence of this conflict between laissez-faire and welfare-state liberalism and its adverse effect on solutions to America's housing problem in the years 1919 to 1939.

Clarence S. Stein, architect and town-planner, was an influential advocate of government intervention in housing. An analysis of his work from 1919 to 1939 serves to show the evolution of this

approach to urban problems and its consequent achievements. A measure of its growth is that in 1919 government's only interest in housing was that of restrictive legislation and regulatory measures providing for minimum standards, whereas by 1939 the national government had established a permanent housing policy involving both direct and indirect financial aid. This growth in government responsibility had its foundations in a decade traditionally labelled as the zenith of private enterprise and government laissez-faire.

Stein's greatest achievements in the sphere of housing legislation came under the administration of Governor Alfred E. Smith in the 1920s. Al Smith concurred with Stein in the need for constructive government housing as it "seemed to him 'good Christian principle.'"¹ Similarly Stein's plans sprang from a basic humanitarianism and a concern for the environment rather than from any political ideology. I propose to investigate the importance of the work of Stein and his colleagues in New York in the 1920s in bringing about this change in government policy towards housing. Seen in a larger context this may serve to support the idea not only that the government of Al Smith continued and advanced Progressive reforms but also that Smith's administration provided the groundwork for New Deal social legislation, as exemplified by the housing programmes embarked upon

¹ Mathew and Hannah Josephson, Al Smith: Hero of Our Cities. A Political Portrait drawing on the papers of Frances Perkins (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1969), p. 330.

in the 1930s. The development of a government housing policy, when traced to its roots in New York in the administration of Al Smith, challenges the traditionally monolithic view of the 1920s as an era of unopposed private enterprise.

The advent of the New Deal administration under President Roosevelt raised the hopes of Stein and his colleagues as government became involved with constructive social legislation on a national scale. New York housing reformers, social workers, and politicians such as Catherine Bauer, Mary Simkhovitch, and Robert Wagner were in the forefront of the New Deal housing legislation that finally passed.² Contrary to the assertion that there was an "eclipse of reform in the 1920s,"³ these people had remained active with Stein in the 'decade of normalcy and reaction'. They were thus prepared to implement their policies when the New Deal afforded them the opportunity. However, the results they achieved, even under a favourable administration, were still compromises when contrasted to their original intentions, which suggests that it was their opportunism that was responsible for

² Timothy L. McDonnell in The Wagner Housing Act - A Case Study of the Legislative Process (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1957) gives a detailed description and analysis of the tortuous path of the most important housing bill of the 1930s. This bill eventually became the Housing Act of 1937.

³ Robert H. Bremner, From the Depths - The Discovery of Poverty in the U. S. (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 260.

changed government policy rather than any fundamental change in popular attitudes towards the role of government. Conservative opposition to government intervention remained strong enough in the 1930s to thwart any fundamental reform that would challenge the supremacy of the capitalist ethic. This raises questions as to whether the New Deal was a liberal or conservative administration and whether the governments of Al Smith in New York and Roosevelt nationally were ideologically or politically motivated.

In the period from 1919 to 1939 Stein became convinced that the problems in modern cities were reaching a point where they were insoluble by conventional means and he made a conscious break from traditional methods in technical planning and construction. In 1925 he wrote that "the greater the magnitude of that congestion [of population] the more chronic the breakdown becomes, and the more completely does it embrace all the activities of the city. We must do all that is necessary to combat the forces of congestion at their source."⁴ All that was necessary, as Stein and colleagues envisaged it, was large-scale regional planning of resources with new cities planned in their totality and restricted in their growth. To achieve this purpose Stein formed the Regional Planning Association of America (R. P. A. A.)

⁴ Clarence S. Stein, "Dinosaur Cities", The Survey 59 (May 1925), p. 137.

in 1923. It was a small informal organisation which included such experts from many diverse fields as Henry Wright (site-planner), Alexander Bing (realtor), Stuart Chase (economist), Lewis Mumford (author), and Benton MacKaye (conservationist).

Through the administrative abilities of Stein these men combined their talents and expertise to produce a comprehensive regional plan for New York State,⁵ and construct the model town of Radburn, New Jersey. The principle underlying their work, under the leadership of Stein, was echoed in the work of the Tennessee Valley Authority and in the development of the Greenbelt Towns in the 1930s. These experiments provided successful examples of the possibility of ameliorating the urban problem, which the New Deal administration failed to consolidate due to increasing conservative opposition. In this sphere the R.P.A.A. was far in advance of other contemporary organisations which continued to advocate purely remedial measures determined by expediency. An example of the narrowness of vision current in the 1920s is the report A Regional Plan for New York and its Environs (1929) issued by the Russell Sage Foundation.

⁵This plan was published in the form of a Report of the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning to Governor Alfred E. Smith 7 May, 1926 (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1926).

In assessing Stein's place in the context of the development of solutions to urban problems it will be necessary to look at both the work of his predecessors, for his approach was largely that of a synthesiser rather than an innovator, and to a certain extent that of his contemporaries and their influence on him. In the latter case, Stein's work appears radical and far-seeing in contrast as his legislative work in New York and his pioneering efforts in regional planning show. However, even when successful in implementing his plans, Stein's housing projects failed to cater to the lowest income group at which they were aimed. This failure indicates that a fundamental solution to the problem required even greater vision and foresight, and cannot be attributed solely to politically conservative opposition. In following Stein's career one can trace the course of solutions to the housing problem as it became an increasingly integral part of government concern. Through the opposition and compromises his work encountered under successive 'liberal reform' governments, the conservative tradition of privatism is shown to have retained its strength.

In analysing Stein's achievements in the field of housing I hope to challenge the traditionally monolithic view of the 1920s while supporting the hypothesis that there were two co-existent strains in America of welfare-state and laissez-faire liberalism. Stein's work may also show that there was no sudden change in public attitudes between 1919 and 1939 but rather that attitudes towards the role of government remained stable. Furthermore, I propose that

Al Smith and Franklin Roosevelt were both politically, and not ideologically, motivated as shown by the limitations in their social programmes, in this case as exemplified by housing. The similarity of their housing policies supports the contention that all New Deal programmes had their precedents in New York under Al Smith.⁶ And finally I hope to show the very real progress that was made in these administrations towards the solution of the housing problem as a result of Stein's work.

6

The idea of Al Smith's administration as a precursor and inspiration for the New Deal is supported by Mathew and Hannah Josephson in Al Smith: Hero of Our Cities; Warren Moscow in Politics in the Empire State (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948); and Bernard Bellush in Franklin D. Roosevelt as Governor of New York (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955).

CHAPTER ONE

STEIN'S EARLY LIFE AND THE INFLUENCES ON HIS WORK

Clarence Stein was thirty seven years old when he started his official work as an advocate of government housing and large-scale planning in 1919. Stein spent the time prior to this appointment acquainting himself thoroughly with past planning and housing solutions in America and Europe. In these years Stein encountered the people and ideas which influenced him away from traditional predominantly individualistic solutions to a social vision of large-scale planning achieved through co-operative means with the aid of government. Although his technical expertise continued to evolve in experiments after 1919, by that time he had already set his social goals for housing and planning which he fought for throughout his active life.

One of Stein's greatest assets in achieving his goals for housing was his friendly, easy-going nature which made him a great many loyal and devoted friends. His natural tendencies towards co-operation and humanitarianism were strengthened by his background and education. Stein was the third of six children born to Leo and Rose Stein. At the time of his birth in 1882 they lived in

Rochester, New York, but subsequently moved to New York City where they had strong ties with the leaders of the Jewish community. For his early education they sent Stein to the Workingman's School, a liberal Jewish Institution. This later became the Ethical Culture School and Stein maintained his links with this humanistic tradition through the Ethical Culture Society.

Stein's career was greatly influenced both by the people and ideals that he encountered within this society. Among those he met either in or through this community were Eugene Klaber, Ely Jacques Kahn, Robert Kohn and Alexander Bing, all of whom worked consistently with Stein to improve social conditions through housing. Through them he gained his first impulse towards social service and made the contacts who could channel this impulse into constructive ends. The society was actively involved in social work and had started a settlement house, the Hudson Guild, to improve the Chelsea neighbourhood. The director John Lovejoy Elliott, a dedicated social worker, imbued all its members with his own brand of social and political idealism. A colleague described his influence in the following way:

By his living among the people in Chelsea, by his nurturing of the Hudson Guild as a true neighbour, in policies of self-help and self-direction . . . he taught and exemplified the meaning of democracy as grounded in neighbourliness.¹

¹Dr. Horace L. Friess, "Dr. John Lovejoy Elliott: A Centenary Salute," 2 December, 1968, Clarence S. Stein Papers, 3600, Regional Planning Archive, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York City.

12

This concept of grass roots democracy became the guiding principle behind all Stein's work. His belief that "the electorate has never been permitted to express itself directly" either on a national, state or local level led him to planning on a human scale.² Stein based his plans around the neighbourhood, and his schemes for regional cities were designed to fulfill this hope for decentralised governments that would truly represent the needs of the people. Consequent to this belief he felt that the public must be educated and informed of the possibilities that regional planning could provide. To him the press was the vital organ in this process and he believed that the newspapers had shirked the responsibility that they had in a democracy.³ Stein, himself, consistently used the press to elucidate his ideas and to inform the public of current problems. His productivity in this sphere prompted his colleague, Charles Ascher, to describe him as "an able architect and a notable propagandist."⁴

Stein not only formed his social ideals through his contacts with the Ethical Culture Society but also gained his first government

²Clarence S. Stein, "An Indictment of American Democracy", 14 February, 1914, C.S. Stein Papers.

³Ibid.

⁴Charles S. Ascher to Mrs. Barbara Hollins, 2 February, 1968, C.S. Stein Papers.

post through them. Through his friend, Alexander Bing, Stein met Belle Moskowitz who was extremely influential with Al Smith, Governor of New York. She persuaded Al Smith to appoint Stein as secretary of the New York State housing commission in 1919.⁵ For his subsequent work for New York State Stein relied heavily on the data, statistics and knowledge of local problems supplied by settlement workers whom he had met through the Ethical Culture Society and its involvement with housing and social work.

The settlement workers provided a continuity of reform ideas from the late nineteenth century through the Progressive period, the 1920s and into the New Deal. Felix Adler, founder of the Ethical Culture Society, had led a movement which resulted in the housing law of 1887, which provided for the establishment of a permanent Tenement House Commission.⁶ He and his followers continued their work unabated through the 1920s when housing reform became a unifying force for the settlements. Their work once again received national and legal recognition in the 1930s, culminating in their role in the passage of the Wagner Housing Bill of 1937. Although there were a large number of settlement workers involved in housing reform it has been noted that there was a remarkable "continuity of leadership," especially by Miss Alfred and Mrs. Simkhovitch, both of whom were

⁵Ibid

⁶McDonnell, The Wagner Housing Act, p. 3.

active in New York.⁷ The same leaders of the settlement houses in New York were in the forefront of housing legislation undertaken by the New Deal administration.

Although Stein was closely associated with the settlement workers and the Ethical Culture Society, he always avoided any strict ideological, social or political affiliation. In spite of his organisational ability and amenable temperament Stein led an extremely independent and self-sufficient life. After he left school in 1901 Stein attended the Columbia School of Architecture for a year and then worked for a year in his father's firm, the Hoboken Casket Company. Then in 1903 he left for Europe where he remained for the next seven years. Apart from one year spent at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris supplementing his professional training, Stein spent the rest of his time in Europe travelling and sketching.⁸ He based himself in Paris, from where he travelled extensively throughout Europe either by himself or with his friends Henry Klaber and Ely Jacques Kahn.

On his return from Europe in 1911 Stein settled in New York City, where he re-established contact with his old friends and started to build up his career. Stein devoted all his time and energy to his work and all his friends were directly involved with either housing or

⁷Clarke Chambers, Seedtime of Reform: American Social Service and Social Action 1918-1933 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1963), p. 138.

⁸Clarence S. Stein, Biographical Notes 1903-1911, C. S. Stein Papers.

15

social work. When he did eventually marry in 1928, he and his wife, the actress Aline MacMahon both continued to pursue their respective careers successfully. As they never had any children this arrangement worked admirably for both of them and they both took a keen interest in each other's work. Stein had started to practise his profession in the office of Bertram G. Goodhue who was renowned for his church architecture. While working for Goodhue, from 1911 to 1918, Stein resumed his association with the Ethical Culture Society and through it became involved with other civic organisations.

From 1915 to 1919 he was Secretary of the City Planning Committee of the City Club of New York which functioned largely as a data gathering and propagandistic organisation in lobbying the government for the improvement of housing and city planning. The war did not interfere unduly with Stein's career as he never saw active service, and he himself maintained that "he fought the war down in the hills of Virginia" as a First Lieutenant in the Engineers.⁹ However the war did affect his thinking about housing when he observed the crisis conditions it caused in New York City. Through his work with the City Club Stein saw the social cost of bad conditions at first hand and from then on he was a firm supporter of the idea that as private enterprise had failed in that sphere, the provision of adequate

⁹Clarence S. Stein, Notes on Work 1911-1918, C.S. Stein Papers.

housing for all was a basic governmental responsibility.¹⁰

In line with his growing conviction that housing was a basic necessity and the right of every citizen, Stein maintained an apolitical stance. When questioned on the similarity between his solutions to New York's housing problems and those put forward by the American Labor Party, Stein said "I cannot speak for the Labor Party or for any other organisation,"¹¹ and throughout his career he never wavered from this resolution. This later tended to prove a barrier to government implementation of his plans, as without a political foothold he and his colleagues were unable to provide a continuously effective lobby. Thomas Adams, a contemporary of Stein's, who maintained a conservative attitude to city planning, recognised the weakness in Stein's approach when he maintained that "there must always be a limitation to the power of technical methods of producing a change in material environment so long as the political power is not in the same hands as the technical skill."¹² Stein was aware of the need, and indeed fought for government support but he remained adamant that housing should not be a political issue.

Many of Stein's technical ideas were innovative but he inherited his co-operative method of implementing them, through the

¹⁰ Dr. Louis Levine, Sunday World, 20 June, 1920.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² "City Planning and City Building", Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9 (April 1921), p. 197.

use of the combined skills of experts from diverse fields, from a tradition carried on by Progressive reformers. His character enabled him to collaborate with experts from many disciplines and even to promote their own individual work without a thought of personal aggrandisement. Co-operation with individuals, groups and organisations was the method by which Stein extended his influence from architecture into large-scale environmental planning. As an individual working on his own, with only an architect's training, Stein would have been unable to spread his work into the overall pattern he envisaged, of which the 1926 Plan for the State of New York and the City of Radburn, New Jersey, built in 1929, were the most effective examples.

One of the most difficult men Stein worked with was Henry Wright, whom he met through his architectural partner, Robert Kohn, soon after the war. Stein and Wright then embarked on an extremely productive partnership. Together they planned Sunnyside Gardens, New York and Radburn, two of the most influential housing experiments in America. Both projects were backed financially by the City Housing Corporation, headed by Stein's friend, Alexander Bing. The City Housing Corporation found Wright impossible to work with and Stein was forced into the role of mediator in order to implement his ideas. Stein considered Wright a genius but even his tolerant nature was tried by the difficulties of working with him and their association terminated

in the 1930s.¹³

Another example of Stein's promotion of his less practical colleagues' work was the part he played in launching the Appalachian Trail. This had been the idea of Benton MacKaye, a conservationist and regional planner, who later collaborated closely with Stein as a member of the Regional Planning Association of America (R. P. A. A.). Through his influence as Chairman of the Committee on Community Planning of the American Institute of Architects from 1921 to 1924, Stein brought this project into the public eye. This was done without any greed for personal recognition and MacKaye bemoaned the fact that Stein, "the man without whom our Appalachian Trail would never have come to pass," was never mentioned in its history.¹⁴ Stein further helped MacKaye by bringing him to the notice of Theodore Roosevelt through a suggestion that he be assigned to the Committee on Federal Land Policies.¹⁵

¹³Clarence S. Stein, "Radburn and Sunnyside," 16 August, 1947, C. S. Stein Papers.

¹⁴Benton MacKaye to Mr. Stanley A. Murray, 28 August, 1967, C. S. Stein Papers.

¹⁵Clarence S. Stein to Benton MacKaye, 24 May 1924, C. S. Stein Papers.

"I find on my return there was a letter from Theodore Roosevelt. He says in regard to you: 'I am sure the information Mr. Benton MacKaye can bring to the Conference regarding the Appalachian Trail and other trails will be of great interest and value and I am very glad indeed that you have designated him as a delegate. Your suggestion of his assignment to the Committee on Federal Land Policies is noted with interest. Unfortunately this Committee is now full and all of the members nominated have

Stein continually applied his organisational and administrative abilities to forward the concerns of his friends and colleagues. He had ample opportunity for this as he served on a succession of committees, for example with the City Club and American Institute of Architects, nearly always as chairman or the major spokesman. These qualities of leadership and selflessness were fully acknowledged by his professional colleagues. Lewis Mumford, who worked closely with Stein and the small group constituting the R. P. A. A., summed up his character and ideals thus, "Stein combined an extremely conciliatory manner with a will of steel; and he had the happy faculty of being all things to all men. . . . Stein was an excellent appraiser of both men and ideas." Mumford continued to say that he and Henry Wright "were united in personal modesty and generous public aims, in an absence of competitive self-display and a keen sense of the essential values in art and life, in a desire to make the good things of our civilisation available to all its members: above all, they shared a warm, abiding humanity. In the case of Clarence Stein, one further element must be added: his keen sense of public issues." ¹⁶

Stein's character and ideals were important because they were inseparable both from the methods he used and the substance of his work and the consequent measures of success it achieved. His

accepted their assignments. I am sure though there will be ways in which Mr. MacKaye's talents can be used to more advantage'."

¹⁶Lewis Mumford, Introduction to Toward New Towns for America, by Clarence S. Stein (Cambridge: M. I. T. Press, 1957), p. 13.

ability to work with other people, whether social workers, technical experts or government commissioners meant that he was able to unify many previously separate strands of development in the fields of housing and city planning. For, although initially concerned only with the housing problem, Stein came to realize that it was only a part of larger environmental and social problems. The results he achieved in this sphere were due, in large part, to his hard work, tenacity, and conscientiousness.

At the same time that he was formulating his social ideals and career goals Stein was experimenting and gaining experience in the technical aspects of his work. The path of co-operative social service orientated work in large-scale housing and planning that Stein finally chose was result of his selection and rejection of previous theories and experiments relating to the housing problem. If anything, Stein's architectural training directed him towards conservative traditional ideals. However, Stein's self-education through travel, research and the observation of his colleagues' work in New York proved more important to his career than the formal training he received at either Columbia or the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris.

The Beaux Arts ideal dominated the architecture of the late nineteenth century. Perhaps its most notable exposition in America was at the Chicago World Fair in 1893. Richard Morris Hunt, who was the first American graduate from the school in Paris, applied this romantic, grandiose style to the Administration building there. Under the direction of the planner and architect, Daniel Burnham,

the whole Fair displayed this same monumental motif.¹⁷ In spite of his training Stein immediately revolted against the aristocratic ethic propounded in this style, and espoused the antithesis of the decorative, impractical Beaux Arts ideal in his utilitarian plans.

Stein showed this reaction in his first experiment in the design and operation of large-scale town planning. He gained this opportunity when he entered the office of Bertram Goodhue in 1911. Goodhue had been commissioned for the San Diego World Fair and had set the cohesive theme as Spanish colonial with which Stein was familiar from his European travels. Almost immediately Stein found himself in complete charge not only of the main building but the total layout of the Fair.¹⁸ In 1915 he reported on the aims of his plan to his colleagues in the American Institute of Architects. "At San Diego a frank attempt has been made to break away from the type of plan that was created in America by the Chicago Fair. The San Diego plan has, I think, more the character and charm of a living city", he maintained.¹⁹ Thus, at the very outset of his career Stein rejected the dominant architectural ideal of the nineteenth century.

¹⁷Albert Fein, Frederick Law Olmsted and the American Environmental Tradition (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1972), p. 14.

¹⁸Clarence S. Stein, Journal, 1911, C. S. Stein Papers.

¹⁹Clarence S. Stein, Talk before the New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, June 1915, C. S. Stein Papers.

However, Stein did not reject all the social ideas and experiments in housing that sprang up in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Stein adopted many of the ideas of the two major social commentators of the 1880s, Henry George and Edward Bellamy as expounded in their respective works, Progress and Poverty and Looking Backward. The fact that their ideas were never implemented made them no less important in the development of solutions to urban problems. As Catherine Bauer, a major figure in housing reform and a member of the R. P. A. A. remarked: "As far as the early background of modern housing is concerned it is quite useless to distinguish too closely between unrealised ideas and concrete experiments. One had quite as much influence as the other."²⁰ Both George and Bellamy depicted the vast social inequality perpetuated by city life and the business ethos in the name of democracy. Stein shared this observation and was vitally concerned by the gulf between rich and poor created by an unchecked entrepreneurial society. "To the few the great city gives all: to the millions it gives annually less and less," he wrote in 1925.²¹

Henry George saw the solution to the problem in a single land tax to tap the resources of increasing unearned increment on land, and thereby provide the capital for universal housing. Bellamy's vision encompassed a landscaped Boston that was, socially and environmentally, a healthy place in which to live and work. This would be achieved

²⁰Catherine Bauer, Modern Housing (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1934), p. 77.

²¹"Dinosaur Cities", p. 134.

under the aegis of a controlling socialist regime. He also appealed to people to reject the waste and extravagance that had become an integral part of life in a capitalist society. Although Stein did not venture as far into socialism, he was vitally concerned to find a means of eliminating "the unnecessary waste which comes from our system of competitive production and distribution," and to remove staples, like housing, from the competitive market.²² Both the economical use of land and the control of unearned increment on land (through single ownership) and the aesthetics of city planning became focal points in Stein's work.

Several experiments in community living and total planning accompanied these utopian theories. Most, like the religiously-based Oneida, failed through lack of funds. Also these rural communities based on a nostalgic rustic vision, failed to take into account an age increasingly dependent on technology. The most famous nineteenth century attempt at a realistic model community was the industrial town set up by the company of Pullman, a few miles outside Chicago. Modelled on English co-operative industrial experiments, Pullman was intended as an attempted solution to the industrial unrest of the 1880s. As such it reflected the idea that good housing and environmental planning could be used as a means of social control and as an instrument

²²Dr. Louis Levine, Sunday World, 20 June, 1920.

of social change.²³ This idea continued to gain currency after the turn of the century with the growth of large-scale planning. Stein himself believed that careful planning of communities and regions would serve to radically alter the structure of society. In his case, he hoped to use environmental planning as a tool for democratising American society.²⁴

Pullman was an early attempt at social control through planning. The experiment failed when the workers struck for higher wages in 1894. The partial reason for the failure of Pullman was the paternalism that the company displayed towards the inhabitants. Stein believed that it was not only a lack of community involvement but also its size, and the failure of immigrants to mix, which brought about the demise of Pullman.²⁵ Theoretically, though, Stein approved the basic concepts which involved total planning and single ownership of the land. It served as a precedent for him when he planned the industrial, copper-mining village of Tyrone, New Mexico in 1918. Stein attributed the success of this venture to its unity of plan and style which was made possible through its ownership by a single company [the Phelps Dodge

²³Mellier D. Scott, American City Planning since 1890. A History commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the American Institute of Planners (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 269.

²⁴"The City", Book outline, C. S. Stein Papers.

²⁵Clarence S. Stein, "The Conception of Greenbelt", 24 July, 1947, C. S. Stein Papers.

Corporation] and its overall design by a single architect.²⁶

Stein utilised these same basic principles in his experiment at the town of Radburn in 1929. Where Stein moved away from the Pullman idea was in his emphasis on the democratic aspects and self-government by the people in the neighbourhoods and cities he planned. To achieve this democratic, politically independent element Stein spent a great deal of time studying the ideal size at which cities could operate both economically and efficiently. These studies were used by the Resettlement Administration in the planning of the Greenbelt towns which thus avoided Pullman's mistake.²⁷

Even more than the experiment at Pullman, the work of Frederick Law Olmsted influenced Stein in method, practice and ideals. In his collaboration with experts from other disciplines to achieve the creation of an organic whole, in his belief in scientific management and the rationalisation of land use to eliminate the waste element, Olmsted started a new line of thought and practice in environmental planning. Progressive reformers continued this approach to environmental problems and Stein and his colleagues inherited it from them. In addition to borrowing from Olmsted's method Stein also adapted the technical innovation of the underpass

²⁶ Clarence S. Stein, "Notes Regarding Tyrone; New Mexico," 3 July, 1918, C. S. Stein Papers.

²⁷ Stein was a consultant to the Suburban Resettlement Division of the Resettlement Administration under John Lansill and gave a report on the operation-maintenance costs of government and housing in 1935.

from him. Used in Central Park by Olmsted, the underpass became a major feature of Radburn, Stein's "town for the motor age."

From 1861 to 1863 Olmsted was the Executive Secretary of the United States Sanitary Commission. From this background in the health movement, he came to consider that parks could answer many urban problems as well as provide a democratising influence. Although late in his career Olmsted became involved with the Chicago Exposition his park work was in strict opposition to the aristocratic ethic of the City Beautiful movement. The latter was largely financed by the "self-made millionaires of Chicago, because it represented, above all, organisation," and consequently assured their continued social control.²⁸ Before this date Olmsted had not had to rely on this financial backing and had therefore been able to carry out work on more democratic lines.

Olmsted's most important work was done in conjunction with Calvert Vaux and culminated in the creation of Central Park in New York. This accomplishment was only made possible by the support his work found among a politically powerful social elite in New York City, including Horace Greeley, William Cullen Bryant, Charles Loring Brace and other followers of the Unitarian William Ellery Channing. This need for business support was made shockingly apparent when Olmsted lost his position as Landscape Architect for the New York City Department of Parks in 1878 with the collapse of

²⁸Scott, American City Planning since 1890, p. 33.

the socio-political alliance that had previously backed him.

The same inter-reliance of business and reform that Olmsted had to contend with and against which Stein rebelled in attempting to remove housing from the speculative sphere is also evident in the housing legislation of the Progressive era. In the forefront of housing reform, at this time, was Lawrence Veiller. He was instrumental in putting through the 1901 Tenement House Law, the first since 1867, in which dumb-bell tenements were outlawed. Veiller was politically conservative and in the 1920s was bitterly opposed to Stein's work. He considered restrictive legislation the limit of government's role in housing and even fought against any public action to build. He did see good housing as necessary to the democratic health of the country through low-cost housing.²⁹ And in 1910 he declared that:

"it is useless to expect a conservative point of view in the workingman, if his home is but three or four rooms in some huge building in which dwell from twenty to thirty other families, and this home is his only from month to month. Where a man has a home of his own he has every incentive to be economical and thrifty, to take his part in the duties of citizenship, to be a real sharer in government. Democracy was not predicated upon a country made of tenement dwellers, nor can it so survive."³⁰

²⁹ Charles S. Ascher to Dean Norman Johnson, 10 January, 1967, C. S. Stein Papers.

³⁰ Lawrence Veiller, Housing Reform: A Handbook for Practical Use in American Cities (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1910), quoted in Roy Lubove, The Urban Community: Housing and Planning in the Progressive Era (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 56.

Although Veiller was the promulgator of restrictive housing legislation, he did not support the similarly conservative zoning laws passed in New York in 1916 under Edward Bassett. He refused to sign the final report of the special Commission on Building Districts and Restrictions because he thought its recommendations were too favourable to the financial and commercial interests of the city.³¹ Stein, who initially approved the theory of zoning, came to deplore its practice. "Zoning immediately passed beyond the matter of conserving that which would accrue to the advantage of the common welfare and proceeded to utilise the principle and the power to conserve, stabilise, and enhance property values," he wrote in 1924.³²

At the same time as Veiller and Bassett were tackling urban problems through their individual methods, Benjamin Marsh was advocating a unified approach to the problem. The result of this was that 'city planning' gained recognition as a discipline in its own right with the first national conference organised by Marsh in 1909. He, like Stein, believed in the positive role that government must play and encouraged people to lobby the government to fulfill their needs.³³

³¹ Scott, American City Planning since 1890, p. 155.

³² Annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, 1924, quoted in John Delafons, Land-Use Controls in the U. S. (Cambridge: M.I. T. Press, 1969), p. 30.

³³ Benjamin Clarke Marsh, An Introduction to City Planning. Democracy's Challenge to the American City (New York: Arno Press, 1947; first edition 1909), dedication.

City planning however did not serve to unite other groups working in the urban field but simply increased the number of unrelated solutions to a unified problem. Their attempt at a more rational basis for replanning cities tended to separate them from other groups attempting to improve social and economic conditions.³⁴

Among the leading figures of the city planning movement were Edward Bassett, John Nolen, Lawrence Veiller, and F. L. Olmsted, Jr. These men, representing the traditional, conservative approach to environment problems, combined to set up the American City Planning Institute in 1917. Stein and his colleagues considered the premises they worked from too narrow and as leading to expedient corrective plans rather than future-oriented directive plans. In concentrating on the city they ignored the broader environmental aspects of regional planning that Stein and R. P. A. A. were to pursue. At the same time that Stein was advocating 'A Regional Plan for the State of New York' by Henry Wright and Benton MacKaye, Nolen and his colleagues were working on the more immediately practicable Regional Plan of New York and its Environs published by the Russell Sage Foundation.

The narrowness of their vision is exemplified in an address to the 2nd National Conference on City Planning by F. L. Olmsted Jr., in which he said that "facility of communication is the very basis for the existence of cities; improved methods of general transportation are at the root of the modern phenomenon of rapid city growth;

³⁴Scott, American City Planning since 1890, p. 117.

and the success of a city is more dependent upon good means of circulation than upon any other physical factor under its control." ³⁵

The difference between the two schools of thought was related to their ideas as to the role of government. On the one hand, Thomas Adams, a colleague of John Nolen's and a spokesman for the city planning school, felt that the city planner was powerless to deal with fundamental principles and therefore should concentrate on improvements within the existing situation. "The right way to deal with the autocratic state is to strengthen the political basis of the democratic state. If city planning gives people better homes and more security in their investments in building it will help to strengthen democracy," he wrote. ³⁶

Stein, in contrast, saw the need for a fundamental change in values. As chairman of the A.I.A. -C.C.P. he maintained that the architect, and by extension city planner, was powerless both while "the frame within which he is forced to work is designed by others who have no concern for the kind of houses that people must live in, and who put the convenience of the drafting board or the legal document above the needs and the desires of the community;" and also "as long as the dogma that all cities must continue to grow, and that growth is desirable because it increases land values and fosters profitable

³⁵"Introductory Address on City Planning", 2 May 1910, quoted in Roy Lubove, The Urban Community, p. 84.

³⁶"City Planning and City Building," p. 197.

public utilities." ³⁷

These two strands of thought and practice continued side by side in the field of planning. The one dealing with problems as they arose and therefore always a step behind, the other, "the line of rational investigation, of scientific and technical research, of individual imagination and experiment" requiring total co-operation outside the speculative sphere and therefore never fully effective. ³⁸

The latter strain reached its zenith in the 1920s when a booming economy served its antithesis, government laissez-faire and endorsed free enterprise and non-interference with growth and development. "The historic conflict, in their [R. P. A. A.] eyes, lay between the tradition of pioneer waste, resource exploitation, and individual aggrandisement, on the one hand, administered communal growth, social controls, and efficient land classification and use on the other." ³⁹

Stein's reaction to waste and haphazard development had been strengthened by his travels in Europe where he saw countries coping better with the housing problem using, by necessity, more limited resources. From Holland he took the idea of municipally owned land with a system of leasing rather than selling for building purposes, thus cutting out the profit motive.

³⁷ The American Institute of Architects, Report of the Committee on Community Planning, 1924, by Clarence S. Stein, Chairman, C. S. Stein Papers.

³⁸ Bauer, Modern Housing, p. 253.

³⁹ Roy Lubove, Community Planning in the 1920s: The Contribution of the Regional Planning Association of America

This influence is most clearly expounded in Stein's article written in 1922, entitled "The Housing Crisis in Old and New Amsterdam" in which he condemns New York's policy and shows the measures of the Dutch government to be infinitely more successful. "The policy of Amsterdam is to lease and not sell its land" and "the responsibility of this whole colossal housing operation is centered in the housing department of Amsterdam, directed by a big-calibre architect."⁴⁰ Stein goes on to praise Amsterdam for building houses to live in rather than to sell, which he maintained could only be achieved through overall control of building projects by an architect and their economic construction in whole neighbourhoods.

The greatest positive influence on Stein's later work, though, came from British planners. The work of Ebenezer Howard with the garden cities of Letchworth (1903) and Welwyn (1919) demonstrated the possibility and practicality of planning and creating whole cities in a total environment. Although Stein did not become personally acquainted with Howard until his 1922 visit to England, he was aware of these developments in planning on his return to America in 1911.⁴¹

(Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1963), p.43.

⁴⁰ New York Times, 5 November, 1922, section 10, p. 1.

⁴¹ In 1906 a Garden City Association was formed in America.

The main features of the garden cities were the segregation of industrial and residential areas, and its planning as an organic whole with the civic buildings as a central point.

Howard intended that the Garden Cities should provide an alternative to both town life and country life, "in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active town life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination; and the certainty of being able to live this life will be the magnet which will produce the effect for which we are all striving - the spontaneous movement of the people from our crowded cities to the bosom of our kindly mother earth, at once the source of life, of happiness, of wealth, and of power."⁴² The design of the cities was thus intended to combine the advantages of city and rural life, while eliminating the disadvantages of both.

The whole structure was to be based on a system of municipal socialism whereby the land would be held in trust by the municipality, with the income based on rents, and the profits being re-invested in the community thus eliminating speculation. This would solve the problem of increasingly inflated land values. Howard also advocated municipal self-government as he felt that "with a growing intelligence and honesty in municipal enterprise, with greater freedom from the

⁴²Ebenezer Howard, Garden Cities of Tomorrow. Edited with a preface by F.J. Osborn (London: Faber and Faber, 1965; first edition 1898), p. 15.

control of the Central Government, it may be found ... especially on municipally owned land ... that the field of municipal activity may grow so as to embrace a very large area, and yet the municipality claim no rigid monopoly and the fullest rights of combination exist."⁴³ Howard placed the emphasis on the eradication of the private profit motive in the construction and maintenance of the town itself while allowing for, and encouraging, free enterprise in spheres not touching on fundamental needs. This principle of modified capitalism was in accord with Stein's ideology.

Howard stipulated that it was essential "that there should be unity of design and purpose - that the town should be planned as a whole and not left to grow up in a chaotic manner."⁴⁴ In his first experiment in large-scale planning at Tyrone, New Mexico, in 1918, Stein followed these principles successfully. He freely admitted the inspiring influence that Howard and Raymond Unwin, author of Nothing Gained by Overcrowding, exerted on his own and his colleagues' work. He denied however that it provoked mere imitation. "But as a whole, I do not think that Henry Wright and I really borrowed form and arrangement, not intentionally so, anyhow. It was the inspiration of two great human beings who loved their fellow

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 60, 69.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 51.

men and who had so much to give them that counted most,"⁴⁵ he wrote.

The creation of cities like Radburn, New Jersey, and Chatham Village, near Pittsburgh, though built on the lines and basic principles of Howard's garden cities, was more the product of Stein's own experience and a commingling of both American and European traditions, with which he was familiar.

Stein reached this synthesis of ideas and practice in the fourteen years before he gained his government post. For seven years Stein acted as observer and critic in Europe, and for the next seven he experimented with these ideas and adapted them to American conditions. Although his professional training had been set in a traditional mold, he early rejected the extravagance of the Beaux Arts ideal. The predominant influences in directing his career away from this ideal were his own character, his early education, his travels, and the social ideals of his friends in New York. These factors coupled with the housing crisis produced by World War I convinced him of the need for government housing as the only means of providing adequate conditions for all and therefore a more democratic society.

In rejecting the ethos of unrestrained capitalism Stein also rejected the architectural styles and housing solutions that sprang from it. The city planning school, represented by Lawrence Veiller and Edward Bassett, remained intent on supporting the status quo

⁴⁵Clarence S. Stein, "The Influence of Letchworth in America," 22 June, 1953, C.S. Stein Papers.

and continued the dominant nineteenth century theme of housing as a market commodity and piecemeal planning in the interests of capital. However, Stein did have an alternative tradition to follow as exemplified in the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, the town of Pullman, and Howard's garden cities. Stein continued this line of development with his practice of large-scale building and regional planning which was designed to accommodate his social objectives. His appointment to Al Smith's state housing commission in 1919 gave Stein the opportunity to implement these ideas on the scale that was necessary to their success.

CHAPTER TWO

STEIN'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN HOUSING LEGISLATION IN NEW YORK STATE

From his appointment to Al Smith's New York State Reconstruction Commission in 1919 Stein went on to serve on successive government housing commissions until 1926. In these posts Stein made substantial progress in implementing his ideals of government aided housing and regional planning in New York. Initially he concentrated on establishing housing as an official function of government in New York State before embarking on experiments in large-scale planning. With the support of Al Smith, Stein made steady progress in introducing constructive housing legislation in the face of relentless conservative opposition.

His achievements in this sphere of government housing were greatly helped by the precedent provided by the federal government's shortlived breakthrough in housing policy during the war. In 1918 the federal government was responsible for the direct construction of some homes for workers in war-related industries, as well as providing financial aid to other housing projects. Although the measures taken by the national government were temporary and induced by the emergency conditions of World War I, its housing

policies gave Stein and his colleagues both a theoretical impulse and practical experience in large-scale housing that showed them the possibility of a solution to the housing problem. Backed by Al Smith in New York in the 1920s Stein and his colleagues were able to realise some of their housing ideals in spite of the predominantly conservative mood of the country. Although the national government had provided a precedent for them by its war housing policy, in the 1920s it once again endorsed a laissez-faire approach to housing within a framework of restrictive legislation.

Through his position as secretary of the city planning commission of the City Club of New York Stein had become directly involved with the federal government's war housing policy in New York City. The City Club functioned largely as a fact-finding and propagandist organisation. Through its co-operation with such organisations as the Russell Sage Foundation, the Bureau of Municipal Research, municipal departments, and settlement houses, it had an unrivalled knowledge of the housing problem of New York City.¹ Thus, in 1917, when the federal government found that there was a housing shortage of crisis proportions in New York City with regard to workers in war-related industries, it enlisted the help of the City Club. Answering an emergency plea from the United States Shipping Board,

¹City Club, Minutes of the sub-committee on Public information, Commission on City Planning, 16 January, 1915, p.6, C.S. Stein Papers.

the first agency through which the federal government carried out its war housing, the City Club conducted a preliminary survey of the relation of labor supply to housing in the boroughs of Manhattan and Brooklyn, New York City.

The conditions disclosed by this study for the government led to a more prolonged investigation by the city planning commission of the City Club.² The results of this further study led to the conclusion that the problem was national in scope and the result of inadequate housing even before the war. The solution the commission put forward was that of government housing along the lines that the British government had adopted during the war. The British policy included the direct construction of houses by the government, tax exemption on new buildings and cheap credit.³

In 1918 Congress reluctantly adopted this solution. To carry out this policy the Emergency Fleet Corporation of the United States Shipping Board was empowered to buy or sell land and dwellings for the use of employees of shipyards. Congress further empowered it to make loans to persons, firms or corporations in order to provide houses and facilities for shipyard workers. Later in the year the Bureau of Industrial Housing and Transportation of the Department of Labor incorporated the United States Housing Corporation which, in

² Report of the Committee on City Planning, City Club, "War-Time Housing. The Immediate Need," 23 January, 1918, Secretary C. S. Stein, C. S. Stein Papers.

³ Ibid.

contrast to the Emergency Fleet Corporation, generally followed a policy of constructing housing facilities directly.⁴ The direct construction of private houses in complete communities by the government had no precedent in America and was a radical departure from American housing traditions.⁵

Even under emergency conditions the bills allowing for federal intervention did not pass without delays as the debate and amendment of the bill authorising the United States Housing Corporation (U. S. H. C.) indicates. In a debate before the Committee of the whole House on the U. S. H. C. appropriations, James Cantrill, a Democrat from Kentucky, read part of a report from the Committee on Rules which "desires to express the opinion that the only justification for the proposed legislation is the condition confronting our country." Speaking on behalf of the bill, Cantrill expressed the conservatism involved in its passage, when he stated that it "only applies to the conditions existing during the actual war in which the country is now engaged."⁶ The bill was finally approved on May 16th 1918, though the \$60 million appropriated was insufficient

⁴Robert Moore Fisher, Twenty Years of Public Housing, Economic Aspects of the Federal Program(New York: Harper and Bros., 1959), pp. 75-77.

⁵Miles L. Colean, Housing for Defense. A review of the role of housing in relation to America's defense and a program for action (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1940), p. 19.

⁶U. S. Congress, House, H. R. 265, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 29 March 1918, Congressional Record 56:4299.

and led to demands for a further \$100 million by the U. S. H. C. in July.⁷

Furthermore, the "bill to authorise the Secretary of Labour to provide housing, local transportation and other community facilities for war needs" included the proviso "that houses erected under the authority of this act shall be only of a temporary character whenever it is practicable so to construct them."⁸ There were members of Congress, however, who did not feel that individual liberty and property was threatened by government involvement. Representative Tom McKeown, a Democrat from Oklahoma felt:

constrained to believe that the loss to the Government will be greatly minimised and the Nation immensely benefited if, in enacting this legislation we would look forward to peace times. Wherever practical the houses should be constructed so as to be attractive for permanent homes to workmen who desire to own their own homes. Of course, I know this will meet opposition in many conservative minds and some will charge that it has socialistic tendencies.

McKeown was right in his prediction, and the final version of the bill was as conservative as possible while still allowing for government construction.

The City Club, in its report in January 1918 had also suggested housing of a quality such that it would have permanent value. To

⁷ U. S. Congress, Senate, S. Doc. 252, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 2 July 1918, Congressional Record 56:8601.

⁸ U. S. Congress, House, section 1 H. R. 10265, 65th Cong. 2nd sess., 29 March 1918, Congressional Record 56:4302.

⁹ U. S. Congress, House, H. R. 10265, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 12 April 1918, Extension of Remarks of Hon. Tom D. McKeown of Oklahoma, Congressional Record 56:285 (Appendix).

achieve this, in the case of New York City, it advocated a mixture of city and federal funds. "The city can procure a million and a half of local capital if the government is willing to invest \$6 million,"¹⁰ it observed. As secretary of the Committee, Stein was close to its proposals, many of which served as foundations for his later work. The causes of the emergency were listed as involving the cost of building on a small scale and increment from increased land values going to the speculator rather than the community.

Most importantly, the report considered the fundamental structure of society as responsible for an housing shortage, in that "American industry . . . organised and cared for all its industrial factors excepting the most essential - man." It further insisted that "the kind of house in which our workman must live cannot depend only upon his salary as a laborer, It must be based on his value to the Nation."¹¹ During the war years the government had come to recognise the value of the laborer, and in so doing was prompted to incorporate, temporarily, the recommendations of the City Club for direct aid in its two housing bills of 1918.

The City Club recognised that the government was not yet prepared to accept housing as a permanent responsibility and thus concluded its report by urging "the organisation of local non-profit

¹⁰ Report of the Committee on City Planning, City Club, "War-Time Housing, The Immediate Need," 23 January 1918, pp. 7, 8.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 10.

corporations to manage and develop the communities created during the war."¹² Their proposals were further sanctioned by the example of England's success in war-housing using similar methods. Stein declared that Britain's success proved "that the economic strength of a nation depends less on its material resources than upon the physical and moral well-being of its workers."¹³ The argument of British precedent was used repeatedly by advocates of the housing bills in debates in congress.

While Stein was in the foreground of those proposing government housing in 1917-1918, his architectural partner, Robert Kohn, was enlisted for its practical implementation. He was appointed Chief of production of the Housing Department of the United States Shipping Board, and two of Stein's closest colleagues in the 1920s, Frederick L. Ackerman and Henry Wright, were also involved in planning the government communities. This gave them the opportunity to experiment extensively with the large-scale community planning identified with the Garden City and suburbs of England. It also established a precedence for federal aid to housing and demonstrated that government financial assistance combined with large-scale residential planning might radically improve housing conditions in American cities.¹⁴

¹²
Ibid., p. 13.

¹³ Clarence S. Stein, "Housing and Reconstruction," Journal of the American Institute of Architects, 6 (1918), p. 469.

¹⁴
Roy Lubove, The Urban Community, p. 16.

The experiments, though shortlived, were enormously successful and admired by all those involved in planning and related professions. Ernest Fisher, Professor of urban studies at Michigan University, writing in 1933, was one of many who admired the large scale of the projects which involved "the services of city-planner, architect, landscape designer, engineer and builder . . . The result was attractive, unified, consistent and effective. It has consequently exerted a widespread and profound influence upon the thought and practice of the country, particularly among those whose professional activities are involved."¹⁵ Thus the government's brief foray into constructive housing had far greater impact than its brevity would presume. Stein and his colleagues were among those whose first hand experience with these projects influenced them to continue the struggle for greater governmental responsibility.

After the armistice both housing bills were hastily repealed and it was re-iterated that it had been "passed by Congress purely and simply as an emergency measure demanded by the exigencies of war," and this only "when it became evident that private capital had failed to meet the emergency."¹⁶ Not content with merely repealing the act authorising the U. S. H. C., the Senate went on to pass a resolution

¹⁵ Ernest M. Fisher, "Housing Legislation and Housing Policy in the United States," Michigan Law Review, 31, (January 1933), p. 325.

¹⁶ U. S., Congress, House, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, 66 Cong., 1st sess., 1919, House Reports, Misc., no. 181, p. 2.

demanding that all work on projects not 75% completed should cease.¹⁷
 As the City Club had foreseen, the national government was quickly forced to abandon responsibility for housing after the war ended.

In spite of this rejection of constructive government aid to housing, Herbert Hoover retained a keen interest in more conservative aspects of housing and city planning. In 1921, as Harding's Secretary of Commerce, he created the Division of Building and Housing and appointed two main committees to co-operate with it. The Advisory Committee on Building Codes drafted minimum code requirements for building construction and The Advisory Committee on Zoning drafted a standard state zoning enabling act under which municipalities could adopt zoning regulations.¹⁸ The result of the committee's work was the "Standard State Zoning Enabling Act" passed in 1924, which clarified the major emphases of regional planning and the relationship of municipal planning to it.¹⁹ In 1927 Hoover sponsored a second standard act thus continuing to support the idea of city planning but still maintaining the government's role within a restrictive framework. His policies satisfied the 'city planners' rather than those interested

¹⁷C. Grant LaFarge, "The Case of Government Housing" New Republic 17 (January 18, 1919), p. 337.

¹⁸Department of Commerce, Division of Building and Housing, Statement, 1923, Regional Plan of New York, papers (RPNY papers), 2688, Regional Planning Archive, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

¹⁹Scott, American City Planning since 1890, pp. 193-4, 248.

in more fundamental solutions.

-2-

Although the national government reverted to a conservative housing policy after the war, the solutions demonstrated by federal war-housing had a continuing impact in New York. Al Smith, Democratic Governor of New York, was quick to take the lessons of the war to heart. In 1920 he observed that "the war made apparent how fundamental adequate housing is in relation to labor supply."²⁰ Unlike the federal government, Al Smith considered that this relationship was a constant and that the war had simply made bad conditions worse. He constructed his housing policy accordingly. In 1919, Smith decided to lay a proposal for a Reconstruction Commission before the Legislature. As he was able to muster bipartisan support the commission was immediately authorized to start work.²¹ As secretary to this commission he appointed Belle Moskowitz, who was largely responsible for gathering round Smith a group of intellectuals to advise him on questions of policy.²²

Among these advisors in 1919, Belle Moskowitz brought to Smith's notice the two men vital to his greatest achievements with

²⁰Message from the Governor Transmitting the Report of the Reconstruction Commission on the Housing Situation, Legis. Doc., no. 78, State of New York (Albany 1920), p. 11.

²¹Josephson, Al Smith: Hero of the Cities, p. 219.

²²Ibid., p. 197.

the Reconstruction Commission; firstly, in "making the executive branch of the government more compact and more responsible," and secondly in "clearing the slums of the great cities by fostering low-cost housing."²³ The first of these men was Robert Moses, who reorganised the state department before turning his attention to altering New York's physical plan with his park and highway developments. The other was Stein who was Smith's closest advisor on housing policy from 1919-1926.

The similarity between Moses and Stein went further than the fact that they both received their first public posts via the same channel on the same commission. Moses, like Stein, came from an educated, wealthy Jewish background. He, too, was brought up in the secular humanitarian tradition of the Ethical Culture Society. He was consequently idealistic about society and prior to World War I in the "years of optimism, of reform, of idealism, Robert Moses was the optimist of optimists, the reformer of reformers, the idealist of idealists."²⁴ Also, both men directed this idealism towards the solution of urban problems specifically in the New York region.

~~Their~~ similarity even extended to their energy and ability to get things accomplished. Stein voiced his admiration for this trait

²³ ibid., pp. 329-30

²⁴ Robert A. Caro, The Power Broker. Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. 5.

when he wrote "Bob Moses' plans are effective. The important thing is that he develops parks, not merely plans them."²⁵ This quality also accounts for Al Smith's loyalty to both men, even when Moses ran for Governor in 1934 on a Republican ticket. If Moses had been successful he would have seriously jeopardised all Smith's social welfare legislation.

In the 1920s, however, as their respective work progressed, Stein's and Moses' paths began to diverge sharply. Moses' biographer claims that he became "power-hungry" and "shook from himself the principles with which he had entered public service while he built up a personal empire without regard to the financial and social cost of his projects."²⁶ Stein, on the other hand, never wavered from his initial principles which he had received from the Ethical Culture School and continued to oppose the path of personal aggrandisement and waste. While Stein fought steadily for the low-income groups in housing, Moses increasingly catered to the middle-classes as he "changed the concept of parks from 'conservation' to 'recreation'." The fact that many of Moses' projects were as destructive as they were constructive ("he created slums as fast as he cleared them," wrote biographer Robert Caro²⁷) was not immediately apparent.

²⁵ Clarence S. Stein, "State Planning in New York - History," 1943, C. S. Stein Papers.

²⁶ Caro, The Power Broker, p. 172.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 256, preface.

Moses used vast numbers of government employees for his projects but they always remained subordinates and he was quite ruthless with opposition or criticism. Essentially he was an individualist, working on his own for his own advancement, and his work was thus present-oriented for immediate gains. Moses was able to retain this independence in his work through the use of the public authority. This was an essentially undemocratic procedure involving business with private capital under public auspices free from government checks or investigation.²⁸ Stein, in contrast, worked in cooperation with expert colleagues and the only criteria he used in pursuing his work was whether it would be of long-term benefit to the people it was intended for and whether it was in the best interests of the community.

The social divergence of these men increased in the 1930s with Moses' growing conservatism shown in his reaction to New Deal policies. "His visceral hatred of Roosevelt had been intensified by his philosophical antipathy to the President's social welfare policies, which he referred to in private as 'socialistic'," wrote Caro.²⁹ In spite of this divergence in ideals and goals both men received the continued support of Al Smith in their schemes for urban improvement.

²⁸Seymour Freedgood, "New Strength in City Hall," in The Exploding Metropolis - A Study of the Assault on Urbanism and how our Cities can resist it (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1958) p. 81.

²⁹Caro, The Power Broker, pp. 356-7.

Apparently Al Smith had no trouble reconciling these two opposing strains in his advisors: the individualistic profit motive and co-operative social service. In combining them Smith was able to put through moderate reform legislation while retaining the dominant conservative business support necessary for its achievement. Political ideology was subordinated to political expediency, and his success in taking a middle course was testified to by the continuing public support he achieved.

In Al Smith, Stein had found, however, a staunch supporter of his view of the positive function that government should play in establishing a minimum standard of living. For, Smith maintained that "a government, in order to carry out its responsibility to its people, taxpayers and otherwise, must assume a tremendous and direct responsibility for their welfare, both individual and collective."³⁰ Smith's policies were largely pioneering and reformist but they were not radical; as his efforts in the housing field indicated "his own preference was for privately-financed constructions aided by reduced taxes and low interest rates."³¹ This preference was given attention by the Housing Committee of the Reconstruction Commission.

³⁰ Alfred E. Smith, The Citizen and his Government (New York: Harper and Bros., 1935), p. 146.

³¹ Josephson, Al Smith: Hero of the Cities, p. 469.

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Stein's post as secretary of the Housing Committee was a voluntary one and he did not hesitate to use the work of other voluntary organisations to supplement his own. His contacts with the settlement houses and neighbourhood guilds proved invaluable in the process of information-gathering. The committee was involved in discerning the extent of the housing shortage in the major cities in New York State, and proposing a solution to the legislation committee in 1920.

The war had been followed by a slump in the construction industry leading to fewer homes, greater overcrowding, and higher rents charged by profiteering landlords. The final report of the housing committee put the emphasis on financing and credit as the fundamental issues involved in an increase in building. It concluded that state credit for housing was the only solution to New York's housing shortage. In support of this recommendation the committee cited examples of other countries which had successfully lent money or credit for housing purposes.³² However, the extension of State credit on a large scale at low rates required the enactment of a constitutional amendment and this measure, though approved by a

³² Clarence S. Stein, "Report of Housing Committee of the Reconstruction Commission, New York State," appearing before the Joint Legislation Committee on Housing, 6th August, 1920, C. S. Stein Papers.



Democratic Senate was rejected by the Republican Assembly. This was a familiar pattern for much of Al Smith's social legislation.

As a constitutional amendment would anyway take at least two years to gain effect, the subject of an enabling act to allow "cities to acquire and hold, or let, adjoining vacant lands, and if necessary to carry on housing," was also suggested. The committee further advocated the enactment of a law requiring the appointment of local housing boards in communities with a population over 10,000, and a central State housing agency to co-ordinate local efforts. Direct government housing was characterised still as a purely emergency measure, while the State's function was seen to be that of an educative, guiding force to "the various agencies that must co-operate to give sufficient, adequate homes properly placed in relation to work, recreation and food supply. For this purpose the State and local housing agencies are badly needed." Although none of these solutions were acted on in 1920, these recommendations constituted the first broad constructive housing program in America

Henry Moskowitz, Alfred E. Smith. An American Career (New York: Thomas Seltzer, 1924), p. 235.

Clarence S. Stein, "Report of the Housing Committee," C. S. Stein Papers.

Report of the Housing Committee of the Reconstruction Commission of the State of New York to Governor Alfred E. Smith and to the Legislature of New York, (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1920), p. 19.

and marked a move away from restrictive legislation to a forward looking policy. This change in policy was attributable to the unceasing work of Stein and Belle Moskowitz who induced a majority of the committee to back their suggestions.

The findings of the committee led to Al Smith sending an emergency message to the state legislature on March 31, 1920, proposing further restrictive legislation to deal with immediate problems. The same day eleven of the twelve bills were passed with little opposition.³⁶ The bills were purely regulatory in nature and were concerned to provide security of tenure to the tenant and to check the activities of profiteering landlords. The bills gave tenants recourse to the courts to establish fair rental rates, and were to have an initial duration of two years.³⁷ The next day the New York Times ran an editorial which criticised the hurried passage of the bills and predicted that the courts would not be able to handle the influx of cases that would be the inevitable outcome.³⁸

Charles Harris Whitaker, editor of the A.I.A. Journal was another who was not impressed by the measures themselves, but remarked in 1921 that "the decision of the courts upholding the rent laws was accompanied by one of the most remarkable statements ever

³⁶New York Times, 2 April, 1920, p. 14.

³⁷Report of the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning to Governor Alfred E. Smith and to the Legislature of the State of New York on the present status of the housing emergency. Appendix E. Summary of Emergency Rent Laws (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1923), p. 91.

³⁸New York Times, 2 April 1920, p. 14.

handed down from the bench. In effect, it declared that the rights of private property must stand aside in the face of a public emergency so serious as the housing crisis.³⁹ This was a major departure from the establishment position regarding the primacy of private property. Nevertheless regulatory measures failed to satisfy either Stein, the committee, or Al Smith. In its report it had stated that rent legislation would serve to "ameliorate the condition of some of the victims of the present emergency" but would not "help in the slightest degree to meet the real present housing needs."⁴⁰

Al Smith, recognising the temporary nature of these enactments, stated in his message to the legislature that "two vital objects were overlooked: one, the encouragement of building construction, and second, the adoption of a state policy looking to the future study and development by the state of this all-important question of housing facilities."⁴¹ The encouragement of building construction was subsequently made in the form of an amendment to the tax exemption law of 1909. This bill exempted new buildings, constructed between April 1920 and 1922 and planned for dwelling purposes, from taxation

³⁹"Tax Exemption and Housing" Journal of the American Institute of Architects 9 (April 1921), p. 144.

⁴⁰Report of the Housing Committee of the Reconstruction Commission of New York State, p. 13.

⁴¹Alfred E. Smith, Progressive Democracy. Speeches and State Papers of Alfred E. Smith, with an introduction by M. Moskowitz (New York: Harcourt Brace and Co., 1928), p. 224.

for local purposes.⁴² This measure was, of course, approved by the conservative element who considered it the function of government to aid business rather than to protect the consumer.

Tax exemption was also generally acknowledged to have broken the deadlock in housing in 1921, without however altering standards of construction. Stein later pointed out that the city was helping to pay the bill through the non-collection of taxes, but was demanding nothing from the builder in the way of better-planned buildings or easier terms for the tenant. It was therefore not providing any lasting solution though easing the emergency conditions.⁴³

In line with Stein's search for a permanent solution and his own desire for a fixed state policy, Smith recommended the establishment of a bureau of housing in 1920, to make the necessary studies to encourage low-cost housing undertakings on a large scale and to study plans for tenement replacement.⁴⁴ With Al Smith out of office for the

⁴²Report of the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning to Governor Alfred E. Smith and to the Legislature of the State of New York on Tax Exemption of New Housing. Appendix A. Summary of Tax Exemption Laws (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1924), p. 20.

⁴³Clarence S. Stein, "Milwaukee Squarely faces the Housing Problem" Journal of the American Institute of Architects, Journal 9, (January 1922), p. 21.

⁴⁴Alfred E. Smith, Up to Now - An Autobiography (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1929), p. 272.

next two years this suggestion remained in limbo until his re-
appointment.

Then, in 1923, Smith resumed his support of Stein's housing programme and the Legislature appointed the first Commission of Housing and Regional Planning (C.H.R.P.) as a step in the direction of the permanent solution of the housing question.⁴⁵ Smith appointed Stein chairman of the commission which "conducted the most thorough survey ever made in New York City or elsewhere of the relation between income and rents."⁴⁶ The result showed an increase of rents up to 90% and led to the 1920 solution being re-iterated: i. e., that the emergency still existed and therefore justified the continued existence of the rent laws of 1920. This decision met with opposition from the Real Estate Board of New York City which submitted a brief on December 8, 1923, which asserted that the emergency no longer existed for all rental levels and that there should be a dividing line in the application of the laws at \$20 per room per month.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁵ Memorandum, for release in morning papers, 10 June, 1924, George B. Graves, Secretary to the Governor, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁴⁶ New York Times, 29 November, 1923, p. 37.

⁴⁷ Report of the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning to Governor Alfred E. Smith and to the Legislature of the State of New York on the Present Status of the Housing Emergency. Conclusions and Recommendations (Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, 1923), pp. 8, 9.

Commission dismissed this objection, though by 1926 they were in agreement with it, and restated the recommendations of 1920 for a State Land Bank to extend credit for housing and reasserted the need for municipal responsibility in these matters.

For the next three years the Commission continued to absorb itself in the detailed problem of rent control, issuing annual reports on the status of housing in the largest cities in New York State, and repeating the same solutions. In his annual message to the legislature on January 1st, 1924, Smith declared that there was still a housing shortage of grave proportions and advised that "the existing laws be re-enacted for a period of at least two years" and "that the way be paved for State aid in connection with housing." He pleaded for non-partisan voting and asked that the situation should be considered on its own merits, for Smith claimed: "It is possible for the State to perform an errand of mercy and do it in such a business-like way as to bring substantial returns."⁴⁸ The rent laws were granted an extension but the Republicans dogmatically refused to consider State credit for housing.

The Commission's consistent upholding of the so-called emergency rent laws of 1920 was inspired by families whose annual income did not exceed \$2,500 and who constituted three-quarters of the population. However, there was increasing pressure on the Commission to provide

⁴⁸Verbatim report of Governor's annual message, New York Times, 3 January, 1924, p. 1.

an alternative means to legislative control and some solution other than State credit. It was concerned, therefore, to devise a plan that would facilitate the return of housing to a free market, as soon as it was feasible to do so without danger.⁴⁹ The rationale for slow decontrol applied by the Commission was the 'safeguarding of public health, welfare, and morals' which it considered would be severely endangered by an abrupt return to the open market.

As the Commission was meeting with such relentless opposition to making state credit available to housing, Stein carried the campaign for financing outside the legislature to other possible sources of easy credit. In 1925, in an address before the Jamestown Convention of the New York State League of the Savings and Loan Association, he expressed his impatience with the inadequacy of the rent laws to solve the housing problem. "What we need now, more than any law, is constructive action on the part of the people," he stipulated. Stein then went on to state the need for large-scale construction by "limited-dividend corporations or by co-operative organisations. By that I mean, a group of people who form an organisation for the purpose of building homes and who use those homes as dwelling places for themselves, not as commodities with which to speculate."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Report of the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning (1925), p. 13.

⁵⁰ Clarence S. Stein, "The Savings and Loan Association and its Relation to the Housing Problem," Bulletin, New York State League of Savings and Loan Associations 3 (November 1925), pp. 4, 5.

For this purpose, the Savings and Loan Associations were in a position to extend easy credit.

Stein appealed to them to abandon their conservative policies and to get involved in large-scale housing operations. In doing so, he emphasised its feasibility and the low-risk nature of such an enterprise. "Our commission [C.H.R.P.] has suggested to the Legislature, and in these matters the Governor is with us, and has been with us for a good many years - we have suggested that public credit be used for housing purposes, under certain restrictions."⁵¹ Although Stein's address was greeted warmly, the ensuing discussion gave an example of the general opposition to any improvement in housing, by whatever means it might be undertaken.

Two members of the Savings and Loan Association voiced traditional objections to government involvement in matters of property. The first reply to Stein's address came from Mr. John Hakes who supported a policy of apathy and laissez-faire because he felt that the ordinary American people in the slums preferred them and lived there purely from choice. The second objection to Stein's proposed solution came from Mr. James Hennessy who observed that "By trying to solve the problem in that manner [subsidies] you are going to make it the business of the State to support the people, instead of the business of the people to support the State."⁵² Stein then corrected Hennessy's

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 5, 6.

⁵² Smith, Progressive Democracy, p. 235.

misapprehension about financing by re-iterating that it was to be undertaken by a system of loans rather than subsidies. The reaction at this meeting, to the policies that Stein was advocating through Smith's housing commissions, was representative of the opposition that his proposed legislation met with from 1919 to 1925.

But in 1926, the final year of the C.H.R.P.'s operation some headway was finally made with constructive legislation. At the start of the 1926 session, Al Smith, in his message to the legislature, expressed his disappointment with the opposition to his housing policies. "Nothing of a constructive nature looking to a solution of the problem, aside from the creation of the Bureau of Housing in 1923, has been actually accomplished since I first called it to the attention of the Legislature in January, 1919," he complained.⁵³ He echoed Stein in his "belief that the great obstacles to private capital for this class of housing have been the cost of borrowing money and present slow and expensive process of acquiring sufficient land to conduct profitable building operation on a large scale," and once again asked for the establishment of a State Housing Bank.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 233, 234.

⁵⁴ Josephson, Al Smith: Hero of the Cities, p. 33.

The bill that finally passed involved the co-operation of the state government with public-spirited capitalists in the production of low-cost housing, while maintaining a veto on state credit and State Housing Bank. ⁵⁵ It provided for the organisation and incorporation of limited dividend companies to engage in housing projects. Under this system there were three parties to the contract: the limited dividend company, the city and the state. The limited dividend company would purchase the land, build the houses and restrict the profits to its stockholders to not more than 6%. The city's contribution was in its grant of a twenty year exemption from tax increases to new development projects; and the state's in its exercise of the power of eminent domain in giving the corporation the permission to acquire land. The New York State Housing Board, which was set up under this bill, was also responsible for regulating the standards and rentals of these housing projects.

Thus, after seven years of concerted effort, Stein and his colleagues on the commission had achieved a moderate compromise of their aims. Their most radical goal - State credit for housing - had been continually defeated by conservative opposition, in spite of the unswerving support of Al Smith and his appeals for non-partisan voting. The New York State legislature had shown the same spirit as Congress over the 1918 housing laws but Stein had gained some ground while Al Smith had been able to retain the support of both sides on less

⁵⁵ Smith, The Citizen and His Government, p. 149.

controversial issues.

The emergency conditions produced by the war and afterwards in New York had caused unprecedented national and state government involvement in their respective spheres. Whereas the federal government had stood by a decision to become directly involved on a temporary basis, Al Smith and his housing advisors in New York made a consolidated advance in the idea of governmental responsibility for the public welfare. In so doing they helped to bring housing in New York partially outside the purely speculative field. The 1926 legislation marked a step towards achieving Stein's ideal of government aided housing to allow construction on a large scale. Although it was only a modest realisation of Stein's aims, the bill was a radical advance from the restrictive legislation which Lawrence Veiller had established as a standard solution in the pre-war years. It established a turning point in government housing policy and was used as a model and a base for further legislation in the New Deal.

Stein himself, was moving increasingly further away from the problem of housing by itself and was beginning to approach the problem on a wider environmental basis. Not content to work on a purely theoretical level with the state legislature, he made his own practical experiments in large-scale housing projects and pursued the possibility of regional planning. In contrast to the difficulties involved with housing, while working with the regional planning aspect of the C.H.R.P., Stein was able to advance its means and practice considerably without encountering the political objections that were inevitably

involved where government financing was in question.

CHAPTER THREE

REGIONAL PLANNING: AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION TO THE HOUSING PROBLEM

Although Stein had made some advance in housing legislation in New York, progress was necessarily slow. Progress in this field was frustrated further, after 1921, by a housing boom which eliminated the actual housing shortage but did nothing to improve conditions for the lower-income groups which comprised two-thirds of New York's population. In 1925 The New York Tenement House Committee reported that there was still an undeniable shortage of low and moderate-priced apartments.¹ The provision of adequate permanent housing in a healthy environment for all members of the population remained Stein's goal. To achieve it he began to give increasing attention to the solution in terms of regional planning. This did not mean an end to his concern with housing. On the contrary, housing remained Stein's focal interest but his hopes for it now lay in the realm of large-scale construction in complete communities rather than in the

¹ Frank Mann, Memorandum on Housing 28 January, 1925, Regional Plan of New York (RPNY) Papers.

improvement of existing conditions in the framework of 'obsolete cities'.

In sharp contrast to the slow progress of housing legislation, Stein made rapid advances in the publicity, technique and practice of regional planning. From 1921 to 1931 Stein and his colleagues had every reason to be hopeful for the future of the large-scale constructive planning of regions including natural resource conservation, public-power policy, and city-building. As a new discipline, combining many formerly disparate strands of planning development, 'regional planning' was open to many different interpretations and applications. The broad radical interpretation given it by Stein and his colleagues in the Regional Planning Association of America [R. P. A. A.] was, for example, in almost total opposition to the narrower, more conservative, and politically expedient interpretation adopted by the Russell Sage Foundation for its Regional Plan of New York and its Environs (1929).

However, in spite of different and even conflicting interpretations, the discipline, in general, made significant advances in the acceptance of the idea of social and environmental planning by the State as a rational process, and not as a threat to individualism. Stein's work was accelerated by the support of Al Smith and the Commission on Housing and Regional Planning (C. H. R. P.) through 1926. In the next few years Stein and the R. P. A. A. made their own experiments in community building with Sunnyside Gardens, New York City, and the complete town of Radburn, New Jersey. Neither of these projects met

with unqualified success, but some of their weakness helped to support Stein's never-ending plea for State intervention.

The acceptance of the ideas of Stein and his colleagues seemed almost certain in 1931 when Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Governor of New York, participated in a Round Table on Regionalism at the University of Virginia. During the New Deal years, R.P.A.A. ideas were drastically compromised but in 1931 the members could look back and see the vast ground that they had gained in a pioneering field. The group that Stein formed in 1923, the R.P.A.A., which was active until 1933 was the driving force behind these advances. Once again, Stein's co-operative methods and organisational ability meant that steady, well-founded progress could be made through the interdisciplinary techniques necessary to mastering the complexity of problems in a rapidly urbanising society.

The impetus for the formation of the R.P.A.A. came from Stein's experience as chairman of the Committee on Community Planning of the American Institute of Architects (CCP-AIA). Stein held this post from 1921 to 1924, and in this role began investigating and reporting on the theory of city and community planning. The Committee saw its function largely as educative and propagandistic. Its findings resulted in various recommendations for planning on a large-scale, incorporating the construction of self-contained towns

on the garden-city principle.²

In order to implement these ideas Stein formed the R. P. A. A. which worked simultaneously with its own experiments and as a lobbying group on official organisations. This small group of friends, consisting of experts from many differing disciplines - Stein and F. L. Ackerman (architects), Henry Wright (site planner), Stuart Chase (economist), Charles Harris Whitaker (editor of the A. I. A. Journal), Benton MacKaye (conservationist), Lewis Mumford (author and spokesman), and Alexander Bing (realtor) - were held together by a common ideology which was contained in the constitution of the R. P. A. A.

The principles that held these men together were that "the provision of proper housing for workers was a community problem of primary importance to the social and economic welfare of the community"

² Clarence S. Stein, "Recommendations in Regard to Community Planning as proposed by the Committee on Community Planning and approved by the Directors of the Institute," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (December 1921), p. 399.

"(a) The gradual rearrangement of existing districts according to comprehensive plans. (b) The control of their own growth by communities so as to preserve all outlying land for agriculture or recreational uses until it is actually needed for urban purposes. (c) The permanent control by cities of undeveloped land within their probable future boundaries so as to preserve all increases of values for those who will use the land. (d) The placing of industrial districts in as close contact as possible with housing areas in order to reduce the human and financial waste of transportation."

and that this could be achieved only by removing it from the speculative sphere. In order to realise this, constructive action on the part of the State was essential. This action should take the form of making low-interest capital available to approved housing projects, as had been done by European governments.³

Another principle that directed their work was the necessity of "improving living and working conditions through the comprehensive planning of regions including urban and rural communities and particularly through the decentralisation of vast urban populations by the creation of garden cities."⁴ These principles would form the basis of the direction taken by the R. P. A. A. in its attempted solution not only to housing problems but also to those of industry on a regional scale. None of these ideas as written into the constitution of the R. P. A. A. were new to Stein. They were the same goals that he had been fighting for since his association with the City Club of New York in 1915. However, the methods he and his colleagues employed to implement them were pioneering and established regional planning as a valid discipline.

The common ideology of all its members gave the R. P. A. A. its strength, in that it unified their efforts and precluded compromise of

³Regional Planning Association of America (R. P. A. A.), Minutes, 7 March 1923, p. 2, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁴Ibid., p. 1.

its ideals. To them, what was lacking in remedies to environmental problems was a comprehensive philosophy which could encompass the problems of the present as well as of the future. R.P.A.A. ideals constituted a fundamental set of principles against which their work, in its detailed application, could be measured. With these ideals as a guide, they felt that it would be possible to both change and control new growth as expedient remedies had failed to do.⁵

Basically, the R.P.A.A. constitution was a direct expression of Stein's own thinking. However, in progressing in the technical application of the ideals, Stein and his colleagues borrowed extensively from other planning practitioners in working out their own synthesis and interpretation of regional planning. The major direct influence came from Patrick Geddes, the Scots socio-biologist who attended the early organisational meetings of the R.P.A.A. at the Hudson Guild Farm. Benton MacKaye's work with conservation and forestry made him the closest of the group to Geddes, who gave immediate and enthusiastic support to the Appalachian Trail project, conceived by MacKaye and promoted by Stein.⁶

MacKaye described Geddes as the founder of a new science. He named it Geotechnics and defined it as the applied science of making

⁵ R.P.A.A., Minutes of a meeting of the Program Committee, 5 September 1923, C.S. Stein Papers.

⁶ Ibid., 12 June 1923, C.S. Stein Papers.

the earth more habitable.⁷ Habitability was divided into three categories: the physical, the economic, and the psychological, and was attainable by large-scale planning based on human biological and social needs, and the conservation of natural resources. The school that Geddes spawned put the emphasis on the upkeep and balance of environments, especially between the urban and the rural. Mumford, too, attributed to Geddes a great influence on R. P. A. A. thinking, enhanced by his direct involvement, but also pointed out the influence of the "whole school of French regional geographers, and George Perkins Marsh, Shaler, and Pinchot, who fed directly into Benton MacKaye."⁸

By its nature, regional planning embraced all disciplines involved in environmental control. Thus, it not only incorporated Gifford Pinchot's principle of scientific forestry, but also that of Frederick Law Olmsted's economic land use, and Ebenezer Howard's garden city. For the R. P. A. A. the definition of regional planning evolved as "a social, economic, and geographic science aiming to develop new types of communities" and "the method by which housing as well as the other problems of community life, will have to be

⁷Benton MacKaye, "The R. P. A. A. Era - A Reminiscence" (1948), C. S. Stein Papers.

⁸Quoted from a letter from Lewis Mumford to Roy Lubove, Roy Lubove to C. S. Stein, 4 April, 1961, C. S. Stein Papers. Benton MacKaye worked with Gifford Pinchot on the U. S. Conservation Commission under President Theodore Roosevelt.

faced."⁹ This new science was not intended as a purely physical matter though. Just as the R. P. A. A. had laid down its principles, so it attached to its aims not only a changed environment but correspondingly changed values. Mumford described its social goal in 1925 as "the conservation of human values" as opposed to economic values.¹⁰ Thus the building of communities in harmony with their environment would ideally reflect and induce a co-operative spirit in the population, whereas the current demography of cities was a portrayal of private enterprise seeking individual ends.

The ideals and methods of Stein and his colleagues were almost as important as the work they carried out. For, in their refusal to compromise, the immediate application of many of their ideas foundered, but over the years, after the R. P. A. A. ceased to exist even, their ideas met continued respect and delayed application. Stein recognised the long-term elements of their programme and wrote to a friend, after Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York adopted the 1926 Plan for the State of New York in 1964 as a basis for all future planning, that the fact their technical planning had a basic, scientific relation to the dictates of nature ensured its eventual adoption.¹¹

⁹R. P. A. A., Minutes of a meeting of the Program Committee, 5 September 1923, C. S. Stein Papers.

¹⁰Lewis Mumford, "Regions to Live In," Survey 59 (May 1925), p. 130.

¹¹Clarence S. Stein to Simon Eisner, 20 July, 1964, C. S. Stein Papers.

Another important element of the organisation of the R. P. A. A. was its smallness and informality. This allowed for the frequent and free interchange of ideas that kept it active for a decade. It also reflected Stein's anti-institutional bias. His mode of work was essentially that of free, equal and therefore creative, co-operation which he felt was thwarted by bureaucratisation and big government. Stein wrote that R. P. A. A. informality was maintained because they "felt that collective statements of most organisations were bound to be compromised, or else the strong opinion of a majority or even of a few members, with which the others concurred because they were too busy or too lazy to formulate their own point of view."¹² The most important effect of this mode of organisation was its support and inspiration for the work of individuals.

The membership fluctuated though it never rose to more than twenty members and the founders remained the core group. New ideas and influences were garnished at the more formal, large meetings held at the Hudson Guild Farm, which was owned by the Ethical Culture Society. Otherwise the R. P. A. A. met weekly, and often daily in New York City. The most influential people to join the R. P. A. A. shortly after its founding were Robert Kohn, Stein's architectural partner, Edith Elmer Wood, who was active from the Progressive period through the New Deal in advocating government housing, and

¹²Clarence S. Stein to Catherine Bauer, 27 September 1961, C. S. Stein Papers.

Catherine Bauer, who was also an expert on the housing question and gained much labor support.

Stein was given his first opportunity to test the ideology of the R. P. A. A. in practice in his position as chairman of the C. H. R. P. It was he who had persuaded Al Smith to incorporate regional planning as a part of the objectives of this commission.¹³ While the commission was active, Stein was able to improve the machinery necessary for constructive planning on a large scale and eliminate some of the barriers to it. As with housing legislation Al Smith's support was vital to Stein's programme for regional planning.

Smith's own views were similar to Stein's in his plans for New York. In 1924 Smith announced that the proposed work of the C. H. R. P. went far beyond that of planning for the development of the cities of the state. Rather, it involved the planning of the future physical growth of the state as a whole including both city and farmland and their inter-relationship. The aim of its work was to increase the efficiency of spare time and thus to develop opportunities for leisure as an aid in solving the problems of labor. He defined the major goal of regional planning as the preservation and cultivation of the great natural resources of the state.¹⁴ In the same year, the C. H. R. P.

¹³Clarence S. Stein, "Radburn - Intellectual Background," 17 August, 1947, p. 4, C. S. Stein Papers.

¹⁴Alfred E. Smith, Memorandum for release in the morning papers of 10 June 1924. George B. Graves, Secretary to the Governor, C. S. Stein Papers.

reported that it had become "more and more impressed with the important part that the proper location of industry and population must play in overcoming the housing problem."¹⁵ In just one year Stein had convinced both Al Smith and the commission that a new approach was needed in tackling the housing problem.

In line with this, the C. H. R. P. called its first State Conference on Regional and City Planning, in July 1924, at which Stein presided. Stein was the major spokesman for the ideal of state-wide regional planning and pointed out that "no city is master of its own destiny. It is dependent on the flow of food and material from other places - on transportation, on geographic influences. The health of communities is interdependent."¹⁶ This conference resulted in the creation of the means for a state-wide development of planning boards to stimulate similar activities in all major cities in New York State.¹⁷

Thus in March 1925, the C. H. R. P. presented its proposals for a General Regional Planning Law to the Legislature, which subsequently approved it (Chapter 267, Laws of 1925). This law helped to lower

¹⁵Commission on Housing and Regional Planning, New York State, Report on the Present Status of the Housing Emergency to Governor Alfred E. Smith, (Albany: J. B. Lyon Co., 1924), p. 10.

¹⁶C. S. Stein Address, News Bulletin of the Bureau of Housing and Regional Planning 2 (1924), pp. 2, 3.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 1.

the political barriers to regional planning by its authorisation of cities from one or adjacent counties to co-operate for the purpose of planning on a regional basis. It further authorised the creation of official planning Boards for these areas, which would be maintained by appropriation from public funds of the local governments.¹⁸ This enactment opened the way to the constructive planning of geographical areas formerly arbitrarily divided into separate political units. This only partially met the demands of Stein, who wanted these boards coordinated in the Executive Department.¹⁹ However, immediate advances were made under the aegis of this law. The setting up of the Niagara Frontier Planning Board was a direct outgrowth of the conference. The new law enabled it to act as an intermediary between the State Council of Parks, Erie County Park Commission and State Reservation.

Before the C.H.R.P. was dissolved in 1926, Stein was able to present to Al Smith A Report Forming the Basis of a Plan for the State of New York (Plan for the State of New York 1926). Stein had appropriated several thousand dollars of state money to enable his

¹⁸Commission on Housing and Regional Planning, New York State, Report on Housing Conditions and Study of Basic Costs of Land and Building to Governor Alfred E. Smith, (Albany: J.B. Lyon Co., 1925).

¹⁹Commission on Housing and Regional Planning, New York State, Report Forming the Basis for a Plan of the State of New York to Governor Alfred E. Smith, (Albany: J.B. Lyon Co., 1926), Introduction, p. 12, C.S. Stein.

colleagues Benton MacKaye and Henry Wright to make a geotechnic survey of New York State. As the title of the plan indicated, it provided principles as a basis for action rather than an actual programme. For to the R. P. A. A. a plan was an evolving concept and could not be determined in advance but should abide by broad guidelines. The broad guidelines laid down in this plan were heavily influenced by Patrick Geddes and his theory as adopted by the R. P. A. A. With the end of this commission in 1926, this plan was allowed to lie dormant for nearly forty years. However, its soundness and farsightedness is attested to by the fact that in 1964 Governor Rockefeller of New York set up a State Commission for Regional Development, which drew most of its basic ideas from this report.

The durability of the report was the result of its broad theoretical basis and accurate analytical view of the relation of the resources of the State to its economic history. It traced the development of the State from the colonial period through the 1920s in order to establish how topography affected the location and activities of people through the various stages of economic, industrial, and cultural development. In tracing the forces that had shaped the growth of the city, MacKaye and Wright indicated that twentieth century technology no longer required centralisation which the steam age and the railroads had fostered. In fact, they maintained that electric power and the automobile favoured decentralisation.²⁰

²⁰
Ibid., pp. 50, 51.

The study was induced not only by concern about the congestion of the cities but also by the decay of the countryside. Through planning on a geotechnic basis, the R. P. A. A. felt that a balance could be achieved between the two environments. The suburban exodus of the 1920s attested to their argument against the city, while it only served to increase the problems facing cities. The report echoed Stein in its statement that "primary costs of intense city concentration are the loss of human values. New York City shows these costs in more exaggerated form than any other. To a lesser degree they exist in every other city of the State."²¹

The report concludes with an appeal for a plan based on the recognition of past and present forces. It also contended that "the aim of the State should be clearly to improve the conditions of life rather than to promote opportunities for profit."²² Like Stein, MacKaye and Wright saw the function of the State not only as protector and regulator, but as having a positive role to play in the welfare of its citizens. However, as planning could only be effectively initiated at a local level, it was hoped that the State would act as an overseer and co-ordinator of activities rather than as an initiator in this case. Finally, through planning, "instead of being the passive creatures of

²¹ Ibid., pp. 11, 51.

²² Ibid., p. 64.

circumstance, we may become more and more the creators of our future. By using nature and machinery intelligently, we can make them serve our human purposes," Wright insisted.²³ As with all work issuing from the R. P. A. A. the emphasis was on adapting natural resources and modern technology to the biological and social needs of the people rather than to the profit of the few.

The R. P. A. A. was in operation at the same time as a private commission was working on a survey of New York to report to the Committee on a Regional Plan of New York. Headed by Charles Norton, and including Frederic A. Delano with whom he had made the Chicago Plan, George McAneny, Robert W. deForest, and Edward Bassett, the commission published its findings as the Regional Plan of New York and its Environs (R. P. N. Y. E.) in 1929, after seven years work. Organised on a vast scale this commission spent over one million dollars in completing its studies. In spite of its size and the time it took in reaching its conclusions, its scope and interpretation of regional planning was far narrower than that of the R. P. A. A. It limited its studies, which were extremely detailed, to the metropolitan area of New York City including its commuting area, parts of which lay in the states of New Jersey and Connecticut. The area, covering 5,500 square miles, contained 399 separate municipalities.²⁴

²³Ibid., p. 73.

²⁴Flavel Shurtleff, "Housing and City Planning in the U. S., 1918-1923," (1925), R. P. N. Y. Papers.

By implication the R. P. N. Y. E. was accepting the predominance of New York City and abandoning any hope of a balance between urban and rural environments. In reply to R. P. A. A. criticism, the report of the commission stated its belief "in the application of preventive measures" and furthermore stipulated that "if a plan were to deal with all physical, economic, and social features of the city, it would be nothing less than a charter of civilisation."²⁵ A new civilisation, physical, economic, and moral, through constructive planning was exactly what Stein and his colleagues believed possible.

The commission which produced the R. P. N. Y. E. was sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation which had been closely involved in the evolving discipline of city planning and had supported projects of the American City Planning Institute. Thus, many of those connected with city planning, such as Nolen, Bassett, and Veiller, worked for the regional plan and brought with them the same pre-occupations with zoning and transit problems with no overall conception of a total plan. Experts from varying disciplines carried out separate surveys which the commission failed to co-ordinate thoroughly, from lack of a basic programme, resulting in some contradictory solutions.

The commission outlined its aims as consisting of the betterment of living conditions through the improved environment of dwellings, by

²⁵ The Graphic Regional Plan, Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs, Vol. 1, (Philadelphia: William F. Fell Co., 1929), pp. 131, 133.

the saving of waste in land development, and by adequate facilities for transportation, outdoor recreation, and other social needs. So far their principles and aims were in accord with Stein, but at this point they diverged completely in advocating intensive suburban development and the centralisation of industry with an increased burden on

transportation.²⁶ Furthermore the commission did not consider that housing should be part of the non-profit making public services, thus espousing the conservative tradition. It listed as essential social needs, which could be borne by the tax-payer, "government, public health, safety, morals, education and recreation."²⁷ It also concentrated on building within the city on vacant land utilising the current restrictive legislation, which was the antithesis of the concept of garden cities supported by the R. P. A. A. The R. P. N. Y. E. maintained that the remedies lay not with the government but in discovering why private enterprise was unable to fulfill present needs.²⁸

These were major departures from Stein's vision, as was the interpretation of regional planning as city planning grafted on to the surrounding areas, and its consequent divorce from the "interdependence of cities and regions." In its aims - the better life, an end to waste,

²⁶ Thomas Adams, "Basic Principles and Assumptions Underlying the Regional Plan," (1927), R. P. N. Y. Papers.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ R. P. N. Y. E., "Housing," p. 104, R. P. N. Y. Papers.

economy, a realisation of potentialities of commerce, industry, beauty, and comfort²⁹ - the commission approximated the R. P. A. A. but in practice it continued in the conservative tradition of zoning, road-widening, and skyscrapers.

In its details, the plan was advertised as being beneficial to the individual home owner, the realty developer, banks and insurance companies, automobile distributors and businesses using highways and other public services. In fact, it was to benefit those whose vested interests were a hindrance to the establishment of Stein's more radical plans. It would benefit the one-third of the population that Stein was not concerned with. The Russell Sage Foundation hoped that by making the R. P. N. Y. E. attractive to established interests that it could be sold and put into action.³⁰

Members of the R. P. A. A. and supporters of their regional ideology were originally sympathetic to the commission. Thomas Adams, its overall director, had worked with Ebenezer Howard in England and had previously expounded a broader viewpoint than was finally adopted by the R. P. N. Y. E. Henry Wright and Raymond Unwin were both

²⁹Thomas Adams, "Basic Principles and Assumptions," R. P. N. Y. Papers.

³⁰Russell G. Cory, Memorandum Concerning Benefits of R. P. N. Y. E. to Individuals and Organisations and How these Benefits may be Capitalised on, 1924, R. P. N. Y. Papers.

initially involved in studies for the R. P. N. Y. E. By 1929, however, Stein and the R. P. A. A. had completely rejected the Russell Sage plans, and in 1932 Mumford made an official, published criticism for the group. Firstly, Mumford quarrelled with the R. P. N. Y. E. definition of a region. Instead of being based on geographical data "as described by the (New York State) Regional Plan, (a region) is a purely arbitrary concept, based upon future possibilities of transportation and past facts of city growth." Mumford also attacked their acceptance of uniform growth which did not allow for the influence of any new forces and also registered "a vote against those possibilities of social control which a plan, by its very nature, must conjure up." ³¹

Whereas the Plan for the State of New York had projected control over population and environment, the Russell Sage Plan was submissive to current trends.

Inevitably, also Mumford attacked their reliance on private enterprise and the sanctity attributed to property values and the status quo. The greatest failure of the R. P. N. Y. E., as seen by the R. P. A. A., was its failure to relate housing to planning, and the premature compromise of its ideas through lack of an ideological basis. Mumford summed up that the "Regional Plan, since it carefully refrains from proposing measures which would lead to the effective public control of land, property values, buildings and human institutions,

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Lewis Mumford, "The Plan of New York - 2," New Republic 71 (15 June, 1932), p. 123.

leaves the metropolitan district without hope of any substantial changes."³² The essential charge was that the R. P. N. Y. E. was conservative and political and had failed to fulfill its potential. This judgement was further exacerbated by the R. P. A. A. feeling that Thomas Adams had reneged his ideals for the sake of political expediency.

The differences between the two groups stemmed, though, from a different view of society and the function of planning. Thus, Thomas Adams replied to Mumford not on the details of the plan but on its practicality. Adams wrote, "the Regional Plan goes far in proposing restriction on rights of property, but no further than it is reasonable to expect public opinion to go, or government to authorise in the future. I would rather have the evils that go with freedom than have a perfect physical order achieved at the price of freedom."³³

In spite of the R. P. N. Y. E.'s more immediate practicality, it seemed in 1931, that the R. P. A. A. had regained a political foothold for its ideas when Franklin Delano Roosevelt, then Governor of New York, participated in a Round Table on Regionalism, organised by the R. P. A. A. at the University of Virginia. In January 1931, in his annual message to the New York State Legislature, Roosevelt had

³² Lewis Mumford, "The Plan of New York - 2" New Republic 71 (22 June, 1932), p. 154.

³³ Thomas Adams, "A Communication: In Defense of the Regional Plan," New Republic 71 (6 July 1932), p. 208.

formulated a definite land policy for the whole state with regard to farming and forestry. Stein urged Roosevelt to adopt a broader programme which would include the planned development and location of industry and residential areas. He advocated that "the location of roads, power houses, and schools, as well as parks, hospitals, prisons and all other buildings constructed for the State should be planned to conform to the future location of population."³⁴ Stein qualified the function of the State, though, restricting it to an informational agency and as co-ordinator of State with industrial development. This co-ordination could be accomplished through a Planning Board in the Executive Department, as previously suggested in 1926, and would serve to integrate Roosevelt's projected land survey with other planned developments.³⁵

Stein supported his argument for a State Planning Board by showing the dual purpose it would serve in co-ordinating the various agencies, both governmental and private, that were gradually remaking the plan of the state. It would also help the Governor and the Legislature in formulating the budget so that the expenditures of the state would be of greater permanent value.³⁶ Stein then had a personal

³⁴ Clarence S. Stein, Memorandum to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Governor of New York, March 1931, pp. 1, 2, C. S. Stein Papers.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

interview with Roosevelt in March in order to clarify R. P. A. A. principles and to enjoin his participation at the University of Virginia.

In describing this interview, Stein remarked that he had little opportunity to voice his own opinions as Roosevelt did most of the talking. Roosevelt discussed small rural industries to occupy the farmers in winter; he outlined a State Land Policy, and finally he discussed the possibilities of State Planning. Stein was encouraged by the meeting and achieved his purpose in getting the Governor down to Virginia, but he was also suspicious of the extent of Roosevelt's support. Immediately after the meeting he wrote, "I think he is a great guy - or a good actor - or both." In the same letter he reiterated his doubts about Roosevelt's sincerity when he wrote, "I wonder if his next visitor were a stand-patter, and individualist, a government-mind-its-own-damned-businesser. What Roosevelt would he meet?"³⁷ So, although Roosevelt slid out of any commitment to the 1926 State Plan for New York, he did attend the University of Virginia meeting in July 1931.

Roosevelt's speech at the conference did not go into specifics, but the general principles and concerns that he outlined were close to R. P. A. A. policy. His main pre-occupation was with the land of the State, its most effective use and the maintenance of a balance between urban and rural areas. He also maintained how wasteful lack of

³⁷Clarence S. Stein to Aline M. McMahon (his wife), 24 March, 1931, C. S. Stein Papers.

planning had been and said that any planning programme would necessitate government action.³⁸ He further conceded to Stein and the R. P. A. A. in asking if there was not "a possibility for us to create by co-operative effort some form of living which will combine industry and agriculture?"³⁹ Roosevelt's predominant interest, however, remained with rural life and he showed little interest in the plight of existing cities.

On the surface, Roosevelt seemed in accord with Stein and the R. P. A. A. though he did nothing to implement Stein's suggestion for a State Planning Board. However, in August 1931, the Governor did appoint a Commission on Rural Homes designed to plan for the decentralisation of population and industry in the formation of new rural communities.⁴⁰ This hinted at the idea of garden, or regional, cities combined with a public power policy but Roosevelt's rural bias served to separate him from the R. P. A. A., although he took up

³⁸Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Regionalism" Round Table on Regionalism held at University of Virginia, 6 July, 1931, p. 3. C. S. Stein Papers.

³⁹Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁰R. P. A. A. Minutes, 14 November 1931, p. 2, C. S. Stein Papers. Stein read extracts from an address by Governor Roosevelt, delivered before the American Country Life Association Conference at Ithaca, New York, 19 August 1931.

their ideas of regional planning in the Tennessee Valley Authority, (T. V. A.) in the 1930s.

The chairman of the T. V. A. Board wrote to Stein in 1963 remarking on the influence of the R. P. A. A., "I have just now found time to read the 1926 State of New York regional planning report which you sent me recently. . . . It tells so well and forecasts so accurately the principles of regional planning and development which I have since seen practiced and proved here in the Tennessee Valley." ⁴¹ While the R. P. A. A. was expanding its ideas on regional planning and gradually gaining a foothold with the necessary authorities, it was also making its own experiments in community and town building which were an essential part of its regional scheme.

The first experiment at Sunnyside Gardens, New York City was essentially conservative in that it aimed to provide quality housing at a moderate cost for the better-paid wage earners and professional workers. If this could be achieved successfully then Stein wanted to take the gamble of providing housing for the lowest-paid workers in a garden city. In order to carry out his housing schemes, Stein persuaded wealthy R. P. A. A. member, Alexander Bing, to form a limited dividend corporation, the City Housing Corporation (C. H. C.)

⁴¹ Clarence S. Stein to Lewis Mumford, 2 January, 1963, C. S. Stein Papers.

in 1923 to provide financial backing.⁴² In providing C.H.C. backing for Stein's housing schemes, Bing

wanted to do something that would serve as a decent, safe attractive place for families and communities within convenient distance by low-cost transportation of industry. Further he wanted to demonstrate that such communities could be built by well-planned, efficiently organised, large-scale operations for those of limited means and still pay an adequate return of investment without tax-exemption.⁴³

Sunnyside Gardens, planned by Stein and Henry Wright in 1924 fulfilled this wish, in that it achieved not only "efficiency and economy in construction, but above all, efficiency and economy in living."⁴⁴ This result was achieved in spite of conservative opposition whereby the Borough Engineer's Office insisted on the traditional grid iron street pattern which hindered Stein's schemes for a more radical plan which would have reduced costs further. Stein's purpose went beyond the architecture and overall plan for he wanted "to create a setting in which a democratic community might grow."⁴⁵ The physical plan,

⁴² Wayne D. Heydecker to Mr. Shelby Harrison, 15 March 1924, R. P. N. Y. papers. "The City Housing Corporation was capitalised at \$2 million, organised on a limited basis. Dividends were limited to 6%. The company aimed to sell the entire issue of stock, perhaps ultimately to increase the capital, and to build a garden city."

⁴³ Clarence S. Stein, "Radburn - Intellectual Background," 17 August 1947, p. 15, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁴⁴ Clarence S. Stein, "A New Venture in Housing," American City 32 (March 1925), pp. 277-8.

⁴⁵ Stein, Toward New Towns for America, p. 34.

though, involving the layout of buildings round a playground and common garden space was important in promoting this goal of community activity and responsibility. Furthermore each block had an association of property owners while the whole community belonged to the Sunnyside Community Association. Although the corporation helped to organise the community association, it interfered as little as possible with the development of activities and did its best not to be paternalistic, a condition which had contributed to the collapse of planned communities like Pullman.⁴⁶

The project at Sunnyside met with enthusiastic support from those interested in the housing problem. The New York Evening World devoted an appreciative editorial to the C.H.C. and recommended the idea of limited dividend corporations to other groups of businessmen as the best alternative to direct state aid in housing relief.⁴⁷ The Russell Sage Foundation, antithetical to the R.P.A.A. in terms of regional planning, was also impressed by Sunnyside though it maintained that it had not eradicated speculation but merely delayed it. Other critics of the project pointed out its failure to develop co-operative methods of home ownership and the fact that it had not advanced far enough beyond the purposes of ordinary commercial corporations. Thomas Adams advocated the investment of token sums of money by the

⁴⁶Clarence S. Stein, "Organisation of the Community," 3 September 1947, C.S. Stein Papers.

⁴⁷"Housing Relief", Evening World, 17 October 1924, p. 9.

Russell Sage Foundation in a scheme that he considered too conservative, but promised further backing if the C. H. C. would embark on the building of a garden city.⁴⁸ It was this very conservatism that appealed to others of the Russell Sage Foundation, as Mr. Wayne Heydecker said "what appeals to me most about the C. H. C. development is the fact they propose to grow conservatively until they are in a financial position to undertake the development of a garden city composed of homes for income groups of \$2,500 and less."⁴⁹

The financial success and the achievement of their modest goals at Sunnyside gave Stein and the C. H. C. the opportunity to carry out a greater experiment - the building of the model town of Radburn, New Jersey. Radburn was designed to fulfill the aims of the R. P. A. A. in the sphere of housing. It was intended to provide quality housing in a good environment for the lowest-paid workers and to serve as a model for the creation of other garden cities.

In 1925 the plans of the R. P. A. A. and Stein were boosted by the publicity given to regional planning and the garden city idea in the Survey magazine.⁵⁰ This gave members of the R. P. A. A. a chance

⁴⁸ Thomas Adams, Notes re statement of Organisation and Purpose of C. H. C. made to Russell Sage Foundation, 25 November 1924, R. P. N. Y. Papers.

⁴⁹ Wayne D. Heydecker, Memorandum on the C. H. C. - Sunnyside Development, 13 January 1925, R. P. N. Y. Papers.

⁵⁰ The May 1925 edition of the Survey, ed. Paul U. Kellogg, produced a Regional Plan Issue and contained articles by all the

to clarify their projects and gain public support for them. Although they believed in government and planning by experts, they also believed that the gulf between the expert and the public was too great and therefore viewed propaganda as an essential part of their programme. The optimism generated by this exposure of their ideas was compounded by the international support and advice they received at the International City and Regional Planning Conference held in New York City for the first time in April. Many of the distinguished visitors, who included Ebenezer Howard, Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker, the planners of the English garden cities, went from the conference to a weekend at the R. P. A. A. headquarters in New Jersey.

Unwin, speaking at the conference, was in complete agreement with Stein in his feeling that "the effect of expansion upwards is simply to intensify at one and the same time, and in a progressively increasing degree, the congestion of buildings and of traffic and the difficulty of applying any remedy." Stein maintained that the further growth of the city was impossible because of three

leading exponents of regional planning in the R. P. A. A. :
 Clarence S. Stein, "Dinosaur Cities," Lewis Mumford, "Regions to Live In," Alexander Bing, "Can we have Garden Cities in America," Frederick L. Ackerman, "Our State in Congestion," Stuart Chase, "Coals to Newcastle," Benton MacKaye, "The New Exploration," Henry Wright, "The Road to Good Houses."

limiting factors: water supply, industrial waste, and transportation of goods and men. He went on to outline what later became the State Plan of New York, 1926.⁵¹

The British delegates were impressed by the R. P. A. A. 's plans, and Ebenezer Howard made an optimistic speech regarding them. Howard indicated his own disillusionment with the British government's failure to adopt his scheme for a group of garden cities and hoped that awareness of regional planning in America would enable a similar scheme to be implemented, under the aegis of the Bureau of Housing and Regional Planning. "Possibilities lie before us which the Americans will do more to point out to the other nations of the world than has ever entered into the minds of any of us. Yes, there are possibilities of creating not only new towns, but new regions, of creating a new civilisation which will surpass ours," Howard proclaimed enthusiastically.⁵² To the Europeans, America with its size and resources seemed to offer the perfect opportunity for regional schemes, untrammelled by tradition and old centres of population.

A year after this meeting, Stein and his colleagues set to work on the problems posed in building a garden city. Always methodical, they started an analysis of the necessary equipment for

⁵¹National Conference on City Planning, Planning Problems of Town, City and Region, (Baltimore: Norman Remington Co., 1925), pp. 153, 286.

⁵²Ibid., p. 8.

residential housing and buildings for industrial, governmental, educational, cultural, recreational, religious, and social purposes.⁵³ In 1927 the R. P. A. A. held a conference to discuss details, such as the location and size of the proposed city, the character of the industry to be invited and the problem of race discrimination.

In discussing the question of industry it became evident that industries would have to be selected on the basis of those that paid a decent wage. Stein outlined the argument, that if the poorly paid workers were admitted to the garden city, the industry that used them would either have to subsidise these workers' houses or advance their wages; there was no other way to provide them with the barest minimum of good houses unless the garden city duplicated the very conditions that it intended to escape from. The wage scale would have to be adequate to the garden city standard of living.⁵⁴ This was, in fact, an admission of the impossibility of building for the lowest paid workers, for whom theoretically the housing at Radburn was intended.

Another question which involved lengthy discussion was that of

⁵³R. P. A. A., Report of the Secretary and Treasurer of the R. P. A. A. on Activities of the Association since the meeting 17 June, 1926, 13 April 1927, p. 1., C. S. Stein Papers.

⁵⁴R. P. A. A., Summary of discussions of problems connected with a garden city, at a series of conferences of the R. P. A. A. at the Hudson Guild Farm, 8 and 9 October 1927, p. 3. C. S. Stein Papers.

the government of the community. Stein assumed that the company would turn over the functions of the government at the earliest possible date to the community itself. The essence of this was accepted but the actual time of transfer was disputed, eventually resulting in the feeling that the community should assume full responsibility immediately, as experience was the only teacher in the question of self-government.⁵⁵ The subject of racial discrimination brought out various ideas, but little was settled; rather, it was considered that the skilled nature of the industries would preclude there being a racial problem, thus absolving the R. P. A. A. from the responsibility of making any set policy regarding the selection of inhabitants.

In fact, in opting out of its responsibility to the lowest-paid workers and allowing the proposed garden-city to become a middle-class white residential area, the R. P. A. A. was avoiding many of the important issues involved in the problems of the cities, that it was setting out to solve. Tacitly, they were accepting the principle that without government subsidy it was impossible to build houses for two-thirds of the population. They worked instead on the theory that these people would be indirectly benefited by the exodus of the better-paid workers from the inner city to planned communities.

Partially the problem stemmed from Stein's concept of a

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 4.

community which he defined as "a group of people having common interest" and therefore homogeneous in race, background, and profession.⁵⁶ Stein was undoubtedly right in this assumption, but he failed to take into account that 'communities' are not self-contained entities and must interact with other 'communities' in the same way that he saw cities as interdependent. Nor did he consider the racial or ethnic element seriously in the demography and growth of existing cities and its effect on land values. Wayne Heydecker of the Russell Sage Foundation saw the importance of the racial element in his studies of communities in the New York region and remarked that "their growth was inseparably connected with the kind of persons who lived in them, for like attracts like," and resolved to talk to Stein about the Jewish problem.⁵⁷ To Stein, however, the ethnic problem did not feature centrally in his plans. Thus, socially, the city of Radburn that resulted from R. P. A. A. deliberations and C. H. C. backing did not fulfill the ideals of these organisations as set down in 1923.

However, in site planning and construction Stein and Wright made many important innovations. Although based on the garden city

⁵⁶ Clarence S. Stein, "Communities" - the City (book outline), 1939, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁵⁷ Wayne D. Heydecker, Confidential Memorandum for Mr. Shelby Harrison, 18 October 1923, R. P. N. Y. Papers.

idea of Ebenezer Howard in its principles and location, the final form of Radburn differed in many essentials from its model. The C.H.C. bought up cheap, undeveloped land near Paterson, New Jersey, and started construction in 1928. The important innovative features of Radburn lay in the use of superblocks, eliminating the traditional grid-iron street pattern that had been imposed at Sunnyside. This helped to cut both construction and utility costs, and allowed for the economic use of land whereby housing only occupied 28% of the total area. The use of the cul-de-sac and the underpass achieved the separation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic.⁵⁸ This was viewed as a vast step forward in city-planning, although it had a precedent in Olmsted's Central Park Plan, as the automobile had boomed in the 1920s and the number of deaths on the road reached peak figures in this decade.⁵⁹

Another feature that was important in Stein's planning of Radburn was the establishment of the park as the central point, with the houses turned around to face it, instead of the road. Radburn only

⁵⁸Lewis Mumford, "Radburn and Its Influence," House and Home 9 (May 1956), p. 81.

⁵⁹Frederick Lewis Allen, The Big Change - America Transforms Itself 1900-1950, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1952), p. 128.

"The number of people slaughtered annually by cars in the U.S. climbed from a little less than 15,000 in 1922 to over 32,000 in 1930. Eighteen years later in 1948, it stood at almost exactly the 1930 figure."

17 miles from New York City, eventually developed into a garden suburb, or satellite city, in that it failed to attract industry and therefore could not remain self-contained. Politically, it was never independent, but was always a part of the Borough of Fairlawn. Louis Brownlow, a member of the R. P. A. A., was responsible for smoothing out all the political difficulties that arose and for integrating it with the older neighbourhoods.

Radburn did have similarities to the English garden cities in its mixture of communalism and individualism. The communalism was manifested in the institution of the Radburn Association, "a non-profit, non-stock corporation to fix, collect, and disburse the annual charges to maintain the necessary community services, parks, and recreational facilities," while the unearned increment from the land was restored to the community rather than to the speculator. Intensely individualistic, though, was the emphasis on Radburn as "a town in which people could live peacefully with the automobile."⁶⁰

Radburn was unable to fulfill its potential because of the Stock market crash in October 1929, less than a year after the first inhabitants moved in. Even with the backing of Alexander Bing and the Rockefellers, the C. H. C. could not withstand the financial pressures of the crash and ensuing depression and declared

⁶⁰Stein, Toward New Towns for America, pp. 61, 37.

bankruptcy in 1931.⁶¹ The interruption of building at Radburn, although it weakened the anticipated design in limiting its size and sacrificing the undeveloped land, taught the lesson that even non-profit corporations could not provide the financial security for moderate-cost housing operations. Successful in plan and design, Radburn illustrated the need for government intervention in financial matters convincingly.

Radburn's success thus illustrated the possibility of providing decent housing at a low cost in a healthy, planned environment, while its failure showed the need for government financing. The influence of the planning techniques used at Radburn was extensive, and it served as the model on which the Greenbelt communities of the 1930s were based. The concept and creation of Radburn was the ultimate example in Stein's career of his combination and integration of housing reform, land conservation, and creative planning in co-operation with others.

Thus, by 1931, Stein had not only introduced the concept of regional planning as an alternative solution to environmental problems, but had gone a long way towards demonstrating its practicability and its possible effect. With the apparently increasing support of Roosevelt for his own and his colleagues' ideas for a regional plan incorporating regional cities, Stein could be optimistic that New York

⁶¹ Clarence S. Stein in conversation with Alexander M. Bing, 12 August 1947, C. S. Stein Papers.

State, at least, would take some constructive measures. In a decade, Stein as leader of the R. P. A. A. had completely transformed the field of planning in his integration of social, geographical, and economic interests. In 1933 the R. P. A. A. disbanded largely because its function had been usurped by programmes implementing its ideas, such as the T. V. A. and Greenbelt towns, and its members were employed in realising their ideas, if only partially. Successful in this way, the R. P. A. A. had nevertheless failed to provide a solution to the problem that occupied Stein primarily - the provision of low-cost housing within the reach of the lowest-paid workers.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE NEW DEAL: PROGRESS AND COMPROMISE OF STEIN'S HOUSING AND REGIONAL PLANNING PRINCIPLES

In 1933, the optimism of Stein and his colleagues regarding the adoption of their housing and regional planning ideas gained a firm foundation. For, as Governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt had continued Al Smith's social and welfare programmes. Although he had not given as much attention to housing as Al Smith, Franklin D. Roosevelt had shown support for the regional planning ideas of Stein and the R. P. A. A. and the experience of New York in the 1920s was to prove important for both social legislation and the housing movement on the national level. Inaugurated as President in March, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued a spate of legislation through Congress in his first hundred days which would transfer much of Smith's constructive social legislation to the federal level.

The legislation also included provisions for realising housing and planning ideals in accord with Stein's work in New York. Although, by 1939, the transfer and implementation of R. P. A. A. work in the 1920s in New York had been realised on a national level, Stein and his colleagues remained dissatisfied with the achievements of New Deal legislation and programmes. This dissatisfaction resulted from

its failure to provide more far-reaching and fundamental solutions to social, economic, and environmental problems.

There were three major reasons for this failure. Firstly, the traditional conflict between laissez-faire and welfare-state liberalism, that had hindered all Stein's solutions to environmental problems, created a rift between the housing experts and therefore weakened their attack on environmental problems. This conflict between opposing ideologies concerning the role of government and the use of public or private capital continued throughout the New Deal. In the early years of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration, Stein and those favouring direct constructive government involvement appeared to have the upper hand as the exigencies of the depression prompted massive government intervention with relief programmes. However, there was never a true ideological unity even amongst those involved in early New Deal measures.

The struggle over initial government involvement was resolved in its favour, but the struggle "between the social planners, who thought in terms of an organic economy and a managed society; and the neo-Brandesians, who thought in terms of the decentralisation of decision and the realisation of choice" was evident even in the emergency conditions caused by the depression.¹ This second conflict came over the mode of administering the relief programmes. Here,

¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co. 1958), p. 333.

the rift lay between those who believed that policies involving federal funds should be the sole responsibility of the central government, and those, like Stein, who believed that local problems were best solved at the local level, with the federal government acting purely as a guide and not an initiator. This rift did not prevent the establishment of the Greenbelt towns which Stein worked for, the initiation of a permanent housing policy and the regional development undertaken by the Tennessee Valley Authority, all of which involved active governmental functions on both a central and local level. However, it did prevent the realisation of the full potential of these measures, especially after 1936, when the administration was confronted by an increasingly conservative Congress.²

The third major conflict which held back solutions to the housing problem revolved around the question of slum clearance. Those with vested interests in the building and realty businesses insisted that federal programmes should allow building only where slum clearance had taken place. For, they insisted, the development of vacant land by the government would make for unfair competition with private enterprise. One spokesman for private enterprise in

² Arthur M. Schlesinger, The New Deal in Action 1933-1939 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1940), p. 49.

"From 1934 through 1936 the New Deal had poured between three and four billion dollars annually into relief and recovery; in 1937, under insistent pressure from the business and financial classes for a balanced budget, it cut its outlays to about a billion and a half. "

housing, after stating that the private entrepreneur could not possibly compete with government resources, voiced the fear that the government was setting a precedent for its involvement with other industries.³ From the other side, government housing was not seen as a threat to private enterprise but rather as providing a service that private capital could not. Thus, Stein advocated government building on cheap, vacant land as the only means by which the lowest-paid workers could be provided with decent housing.

There were other contributory factors to Stein's disappointment with New Deal measures. He became disillusioned quickly by the difficulties of working within a bureaucracy and by the failure of housing reformers to gain a secure political foothold.⁴ The ambivalence of Franklin D. Roosevelt in following the policies of Stein and his colleagues was influenced both by his rural bias and by the general antipathy to the predominance of New York and the fear

³Jacob Mark, letter to the editor, New York Times, 14 November 1933.:

"It is quite obvious that no private entrepreneur can compete with the government resources. . . . Once the principle is established that the government will engage in any work which is not being done fast enough under our present methods, there will be no industry in which it will not be free to engage."

⁴Although several of Stein's colleagues held important administrative posts, they never had the full confidence or backing of Roosevelt. One example, was Roosevelt's treatment of the National Public Housing Conference, whose leaders were Edith Elmer Wood, Mary Simkhovitch, and Helen Alfred. Both before and after the introduction of their housing bill by Senator Wagner in 1935 Roosevelt indicated, publicly, his approval of their work and ideas, yet he opposed the bill.

that it would gain disproportionately from the housing programmes.⁵

Thus, although the experience of New York in the 1920s opened the way for constructive government legislation, the strength of the New York housing groups that consolidated in the 1930s proved a hindrance to the full development of their programmes.

As Governor of New York in the depression years, Franklin D. Roosevelt inherited the reform programmes of Al Smith, which he carried on, enacting social legislation in various spheres including housing, education, budgeting, welfare, parks and the public ownership of power resources.⁶ He also shared with Smith the idea of governmental responsibility for the welfare of the people and consequently the constructive role that government must play. His policies regarding housing and regional planning in the New Deal illustrate how far he had already formulated his ideas in this field as Governor of New York, and also how closely he adhered to Al Smith's reform programme. Franklin D. Roosevelt not only carried this programme from the state to the national level, but also used advisors from New York to effect it.

⁵ Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The Inside Struggle 1936-39 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 231.

"October 22, 1937. The President also remarked that it would be bad if the country got the idea that a little group in New York was running Housing."

⁶ Bellush, Franklin D. Roosevelt as Governor of New York, p. 33.

For example, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which began operation in May 1933 was in the charge of Harry L. Hopkins who had directed state relief activities in New York under Roosevelt's governorship, and in 1934 he became director of the Federal Housing Administration (FHA). In the solution of environmental problems Roosevelt pursued the three major strands which Al Smith and Stein had developed in this sphere. Thus New Deal achievements in environmental matters included legislation to help procure low-cost housing, community building, and regional planning.

Although the precedence of constructive social legislation in New York State smoothed the way for federal involvement, the depression had already convinced national leaders of the need for social and economic planning. In 1930 the economic situation forced President Hoover to change from his advocacy of economic individualism to that of social control. He then started to push public works, although hesitantly. With regard to this new outlook, Hoover called for a National Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership and made its aim "the mobilisation of existing movements and the possible development from it of a new state of thought and action."⁷ Stein saw Hoover's new approach to the housing problem as a final realisation of the important relation between home and community life and

⁷Quoted in Clarence S. Stein, "The President's Housing Conference - A Challenging Opportunity", American City 43 (November 1930), p. 141.

industrial efficiency and social progress.⁸ This correlation influenced the federal construction of World War I, and was also the driving force behind Al Smith's fight for low-cost housing. However, the results of the conference were disappointing though it gave attention to slum clearance, the building of new industrial communities and decentralisation. Stein continued to maintain that the fundamental problem of financing and constructing housing for the lowest-paid workers had not been tackled realistically.⁹

The legislation that resulted from this conference was conservative but it brought to the fore the people who worked together consistently in housing legislation from this point onwards and eventually achieved the breakthrough marked by the Wagner-Steagall Bill of 1937. Initially, in 1932 the Relief and Construction Act sponsored by Senator Robert Wagner of New York set up the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (R. F. C.). This allowed for loans to be made to the states engaged in self-supporting public works projects. In 1931 Edith Elmer Wood of the R. P. A. A. had joined forces with Mary K. Simkhovitch and Helen Alfred of the settlement house movement in forming the National Public Housing Conference. (NPHC). This group ensured that Wagner, through his secretary Leon Keyserling, included a

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Clarence S. Stein, review of Slums, Large-Scale Housing and Decentralisation, Vol. 3, published by the President's Conference on Home Building and Home Ownership, in Nation, 2 August 1932.

provision for R. F. C. loans to limited-dividend housing corporations regulated by state law. The regulations included were that the housing should be for families of low income or for the reconstruction of slum areas. These corporations were to be subject to state and municipal laws as to rents, charges, capital structures, and rate of return.¹⁰ The same combination of people, with further support from their New York colleagues, was responsible for the continuing evolution of federal housing policy in the New Deal.

The New York influence in this bill was extremely strong. For, when the R. F. C. powers were extended to housing in 1932, the New York State Board of Housing created by the New York State Housing Law in 1926, was the only agency fulfilling the conditions of the law. Stein, then serving on the committee on the economics of housing and site-planning of the American Institute of Architects, pushed for the creation of similar housing boards in other states and furthermore urged municipalities to adopt legislation which would allow for their participation in the federal housing programme. Once established, these local housing authorities would then be put under the direction of a trained technical board in Washington which would supervise the use of money furnished by the federal government.¹¹ This law

¹⁰ J. Joseph Huthmacher, Senator Robert F. Wagner and the Rise of Urban Liberalism (New York: Atheneum Press, 1968), p. 97.

¹¹ New York Times, 12 June 1932.

exemplified not only how far New York was ahead of other states in housing provisions, but also how astute Stein had been in foreseeing the future course of solutions to the housing problem and making it acceptable to a majority.

New York was quick to take advantage of this legislation and Governor Herbert Lehman set up a State Emergency Public Works Commission immediately to screen projects falling under the auspices of this new law and determine which should be submitted to Washington. Lehman named Robert Moses as chairman, and he duly obtained funds for the Port of New York Authority to construct the Lincoln Tunnel, and for the city to construct Hillside Homes and other housing developments.¹² Stein was appointed architect to the Hillside project, the first to receive an R.F.C. loan. At Hillside, Stein repeated the formula of Sunnyside, in constructing a complete neighbourhood on vacant land within the city. It fulfilled Stein's criteria for quality, low-cost housing, though its inhabitants did not include any families formerly housed in slums. At the dedication in 1933, Stein said, "Hillside will never be blighted. It was planned, built, and will be operated as a complete integrated neighbourhood. It will control its own environment. It will be managed by a company that knows its success depends on the preservation of its unique features."¹³

¹² Caro, The Power Broker, p. 345.

¹³ Clarence S. Stein, Speech at dedication of Hillside Housing (typewritten), 29 June 1933, C.S. Stein Papers.

The effect of a government insured low-interest loan and utilisation of the New York tax exemption law resulted in the possibility of charging relatively low rentals at Hillside, which supported Stein's argument that a large part of the cost of housing came from the use of expensive capital. Another important factor in keeping rentals down at Hillside was the fact of its continuous occupancy.¹⁴ Although eventually successful, the Hillside Homes development was one of many R.F.C. projects that met with repeated opposition and delays at every stage before its final completion. In October 1932 Robert Kohn reported investor opposition to loans by the R.F.C. to programmes involving low-cost housing.¹⁵ Most of this opposition came from real estate boards who saw government involvement as unfair competition to private construction and individual initiative, and indeed a discouragement to it. In the Hillside project, real estate boards, property owners, and brokers objected to its tax exempt status, and the fact that it had been built on vacant land and therefore did not qualify as slum clearance. They endorsed their argument by pointing out the number of vacant apartments in the Bronx area and by stating, correctly, that the low rents offered were not attracting slum-dwellers but people from similar standard, higher rental housing.¹⁶

¹⁴Stein, Toward New Towns for America, p. 100.

¹⁵New York Times, 17 October 1932.

¹⁶Ibid., 6 November 1932.

Hillside's completion was delayed because of the vociferous opposition to it. It was initially denied tax exemption and had its loan postponed and it proved to be the last project financed by the R. F. C. on vacant land.

In 1933 the financing of this project was transferred from the R. F. C. to the Public Works Administration (PWA). Roosevelt established the PWA under Harold Ickes who avowed a constant interest in housing, though he did not support the leading lobbyists from New York consistently.¹⁷ On June 23, 1933 a housing division was organised to carry out the programme provided for by Title 11, section 202(d), of the National Industrial Recovery Act. The PWA Housing Division had five principal objectives as outlined by Harold Ickes;

First, to deal with the unemployment situation by giving employment to workers, especially those in the building and heavy-industry trades. Second, to furnish decent, sanitary dwellings to those whose incomes are so low that private capital is unable to provide adequate housing within their means. Third, to eradicate and rehabilitate slum areas. Fourth, to demonstrate to private builders, planners, and the public at large the practicability of large-scale community planning. Fifth, to encourage the enactment of necessary state-enabling housing legislation so as to make possible an early decentralisation of the construction and operation of public housing projects.¹⁸

¹⁷Ickes, The Inside Struggle 1936-39, p. 215.

¹⁸U. S., Congress, Senate, 75th Congress, 1st sess., Committee on Education and Labor, Hearings to create a United States Housing Authority (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1937), p. 20.

The last objective and the encouragement and pressure on the state government by the federal agencies demonstrated that the housing movement was initially confined to activists in New York. After the passage of the bill authorising the R. F. C. both Stein and Robert Kohn had remarked on the lack of interest shown by municipal and state officials in gaining enabling legislation and wrote propagandistic tracts encouraging immediate action.¹⁹ Although Ickes professed a wish for decentralisation in the statement of PWA aims, he subsequently did all in his power to keep low-cost housing not only within the hands of the federal government but in the Department of the Interior over which he presided.

Essentially the Housing Division of the PWA replaced the R. F. C. and received every application for loans that had been made to it in addition to new applications. As New York, in 1933, was still the only State qualified to take advantage of this legislation, Ickes decided to concentrate on the direct federal construction of housing, pending the enactment of adequate state legislation. Up until this point New York City had received more than four-fifths of all the funds and dwellings involved.²⁰

Ickes' statement of aims gave immediate hope to Stein in that it

¹⁹ New York Times, 10 April 1932, p. 1.

²⁰ Robert M. Fisher, Twenty Years of Public Housing. Economic Aspects of the Federal Program (New York: Harper and Bros., 1959), p. 85.

had spelled out some of his most cherished ideas about housing. In June 1933 Stein wrote a forceful article on the housing situation and its economics. He recounted that slums were too expensive for any city to bear and that the poor quality low-cost housing resulting from the speculative boom in the 1920s cost municipalities more than they received in taxes. He appealed to the self-interest of the municipalities to end obsolete methods of individual development. With reference to the PWA, Stein's tone became optimistic in that he felt it offered the opportunity not only to replace obsolete blighted areas, but also to build whole new communities on the lines of Radburn.²¹

In line with this opportunity, under the provisions of the PWA Stein started preliminary drawings and estimates for developments in or near Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Los Angeles and San Francisco, California, and Valley Stream in Nassau County, just outside New York City. For various reasons none of these projects materialised and already Stein began to show impatience with having to work under a distant centralised authority. In 1933, at the time Stein was planning these projected communities, there was an opportunity to use unemployed building craftsmen. For, Stein pointed out, housing construction, around New York anyway, had declined ninety-five percent between 1928 and 1932 and eighty-five percent of

²¹ Clarence S. Stein, "Housing and the Depression" (Copy), Octagon (June 1933), C. S. Stein Papers.

the building workers were unemployed. However, the building of communities on a large scale was delayed until 1935 when the Greenbelt towns were constructed by mainly unskilled workers, which served to raise the cost considerably.²²

Stein encountered repeated obstacles to his plans under the PWA in spite of the fact that the first director of the housing division, from July 1933 to 1934, was his architectural partner Robert Kohn, who was also a member of the R. P. A. A. In 1933 the R. P. A. A. ceased to be active as a group and although it was reconstituted as the Regional Development Council of America in 1948 it never regained its impetus. The main reason for the group's splintering at this point was that its members were all involved in putting R. P. A. A. ideas into practice in their respective fields. Edith Elmer Wood, Catherine Bauer, and Robert Kohn were working with housing legislation and government administration, Stein and Wright (before his death in 1936) with community building and Benton MacKaye with regional planning.

After the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act (N. I. R. A.) Roosevelt unofficially informed Robert Kohn that \$150 million would be spent on housing that year.²³ With this information in mind, the R. P. A. A., in its last co-operative effort, formulated a housing policy to be submitted to Roosevelt and Congress.

²²Stein, Toward New Towns for America, pp. 114, 115.

²³R. P. A. A., Minutes, 17 May 1933, C. S. Stein Papers.

From their own experience they had come to accept that the lowest third income group could not be reached without a subsidy. Ickes was also in favour of subsidised housing and was a firm supporter of the Wagner-Steagall Bill which advocated subsidies.²⁴ Consequently the R. P. A. A. felt that under the N. I. R. A. a concerted effort should be made to provide middle-income housing. Furthermore, R. P. A. A. considered slum clearance too expensive and therefore wanted attention focused on the use of undeveloped land. And, in fact, despite the opposition of real estate groups, the PWA followed this advice and financed twenty out of fifty-one projects on vacant land.²⁵

The main objectives that Stein and his colleagues insisted on were that housing construction should be in complete self-contained neighbourhoods achieved by large-scale planning, building, and management under technical rather than business control. All of these restrictions were intended to avoid waste and lower prices. Secondly, Stein stipulated that housing should be located as part of a plan for future social and economical development of a region so as to best distribute population in relation to industry and use of leisure

²⁴ Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The First Thousand Days, 1933-6 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), pp. 366, 367.

²⁵ Clifford E. Pyncheon, Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works - Housing Division, Status of Projects, 2 October 1935, C. S. Stein Papers.

time.²⁶ Although the PWA was more concerned with providing housing where it was desperately needed, if only for the sake of present expediency, extensive studies were undertaken according to Stein's recommendations before the Greenbelt locations were finally decided on by the Resettlement Administration.

This document outlining a housing policy for the government was submitted, in expanded form, to representatives of the new PWA and published in the New York Sun. In it the R. P. A. A. established that the rate of interest on loans should be at its cost to the government. But, for the lowest income group the full cost of a project should be lent if necessary and amortisation of the cheapest housing should be on a long term basis. In social terms the R. P. A. A. stipulated that it was essential for the democratic health and ultimate economic value of the new housing that no kind of class segregation be made in the design or layout of the buildings. It summed up with the assertion that these principles, as manifested in World War I housing, Sunnyside, and Radburn, were now universally accepted by as politically diverse countries as Russia and England. The emphasis of the R. P. A. A. report lay on the need for economic innovation rather than technical innovation.²⁷

²⁶ Clarence S. Stein, "A Housing Policy for the United States," 15 May 1933, C. S. Stein Papers.

²⁷ R. P. A. A., "A Housing Policy for the United States," New York Sun, 12 June 1933.

The PWA adopted a policy whereby it could make grants up to 30 percent of the total cost of construction and loans of up to 70 percent to public bodies, and allowed for a sixty year amortisation period.²⁸ However, from 1934 onwards, Ickes concentrated on direct federal construction which involved bypassing local authorities. He hoped, though, that these projects once constructed, could be turned over to state or municipal authorities to manage.²⁹ The federal government encountered difficulties in keeping building costs down to ensure low rentals and legal obstacles concerning the condemnation of slum-occupied land for clearance and construction of new housing.

In 1935, in New York City Housing Authority v. Muller (279 NYS 299 (1935)), the court upheld low-cost housing and slum clearance as "public uses" for which the state or an authority created by the state could exercise the right of eminent domain, thus clearing the way for state initiative in this matter. The need for decentralisation of the whole program, including clearance, construction, and management was enhanced when the Department of Justice, without warning, obtained a Supreme Court dismissal of two federal condemnation cases arising in Louisville and Detroit. This decision avoided testing

²⁸ Clifford E. Pynchon, Status of Projects, 2 October 1935, C. S. Stein Papers.

²⁹ New York Times, 22nd November 1933.

the issue of the constitutionality of federal slum-clearance, low-cost housing and rural resettlement programmes. This move was attributed to Roosevelt as it was against Ickes' centralising policy.³⁰ Although fifty-one projects were successfully completed under the PWA between 1933 and 1937, there was general dissatisfaction with the amount of time and money spent on these projects. This was due largely to Ickes' insistence on keeping the programme centralised, to the extent that he had refused money to a New York City project because the city had wanted to do its own construction.³¹

The failure of the PWA to reach those who really needed housing spurred on the New York housing reformers who continued their fight for a permanent housing policy under its own authority, divorced from the idea of unemployment relief. Their concern was only with public housing, whereas Roosevelt was, perhaps, more interested in boosting private building. To this end, Congress passed the National Housing Act in 1934. This provided insurance protection for savings in loan associations and established the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) under Hopkins, to insure small loans for home modernisation and improvement, and mortgages for homes and rental housing projects. Roosevelt informed legislative leaders that the bill was designed to aid the nation residentially, commercially, and industrially.³²

³⁰ Ibid., 6 March 1936.

³¹ Ibid., 21 January 1935.

³² Ibid., 29 May 1934.

Increasingly the housing programmes became the focal point of recovery and the backbone of the work relief programme because the projects were essentially self-liquidating and also provided employment. Although this bill provided an essential boost to private construction, there was a more important development for the future of public housing in August of the same year.

At the instance of Robert Kohn, and with funds from the Rockefeller Foundation, Charles Ascher, formerly the City Housing Corporation lawyer, brought Sir Raymond Unwin over from England to advise on government housing. Unwin had been a consultant at Radburn and closely involved with Stein's plans. In inviting him to tour the eastern part of the United States, Ascher was acting on behalf of the National Association of Housing Officials.³³ The importance of this tour lay in the expert, in-depth study that Unwin, Henry Wright, Catherine Bauer, and other top housing officials made and its unifying effect on the various housing groups.

They subjected their findings to a joint meeting of the National Association of Housing Officials, the National Public Housing Conference (NPHC) and the Labor Housing Conference. Louis Brownlow, municipal consultant for Radburn, was named chairman of the meetings because of his experience there and his

³³Charles S. Ascher to Dr. Peter S. Bing, 28 August 1965, C. S. Stein Papers.

position as director of the Public Administration Clearing House.³⁴

The result of these meetings was a bill drafted by the NPHC for a long-range public housing programme, which eventually evolved into the Wagner-Steagall Bill in 1937. It advocated a single federal housing agency, and proposed decentralisation of the housing programme. For this purpose, the lobbyists once again joined with Senator Robert Wagner. Wagner introduced their bill providing for the initiation of low-rent projects by local authorities and for financing by the federal government, in 1935.

The bill was intended "to promote the public health, safety and welfare by providing for the elimination of insanitary and dangerous housing conditions, to relieve congested areas, to aid in the construction and supervision of low-rental dwelling accommodations."³⁵ That is, it was intended to succeed where the PWA had failed. It also intended to create a permanent Housing Division in the Department of the Interior, whose duty it would be to dispense outright capital grants and to make loans at favourable rates of interest to local public bodies submitting feasible slum clearance and low-cost housing plans.³⁶ In

³⁴ McDonnell, The Wagner Housing Act, p. 77.

³⁵ Congressional Record, 74th Cong., 1st sess., 4419, 14233, 1935.

³⁶ U. S., Senate 74th Cong., 1st sess., Committee on Education and Labor, Hearings on S. 2392: Slum and Low-Rent Public Housing, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935)

1935, two groups clashed over the Wagner Bill.

Ickes supported Wagner's proposal that the government spend \$1 billion as a subsidy for slum clearance and other low-cost housing undertakings, while another strong administration group prepared legislation to clear the way for large-scale financing by private companies for people with incomes from \$1500 to \$3000. The latter group was concerned with FHA policy as the solution, whereas Ickes and Wagner adhered fairly closely to PWA policy.³⁷ There was further disagreement over this measure between Ickes and Roosevelt. The latter did not want financing to be the total responsibility of the federal government but wanted the cost divided between the federal and local governments. With all these conflicts the bill failed to pass the House and LaGuardia, the Mayor of New York, blamed its demise entirely on the administration and its lack of sincerity regarding housing measures.³⁸ The bill was finally passed as the Wagner-Steagall Bill in 1937 after several amendments and modifications.³⁹

In 1937, in his annual message to Congress, Roosevelt had made special mention of the housing problem and the failure of democracy to deal with it. "There are far-reaching problems still with us," he

³⁷New York Times, 22 January 1936.

³⁸Ibid., 19 April 1936, 22 June 1936.

³⁹McDonnell gives a full account of its passage in The Wagner Housing Act.

said, "for which democracy must find solutions if it is to consider itself successful. For example, many millions of Americans still live in habitations which not only fail to provide the physical benefits of modern civilisation, but breed disease and impair the health of future generations.⁴⁰ This speech was undoubtedly helpful in the eventual passage of the bill for opposition remained constant.

Objections to the bill included the repeated fear that New York City would be the main benefactee, that rural areas would not benefit, and the vast amount of federal spending involved.⁴¹ An increasingly conservative Congress was approving less expenditure on the part of the government, and in 1937 more than halved financial outlays of the three preceding years, with a cut of \$18 million in public works.

In its final form the Wagner-Steagall Bill set up a United States Housing Authority (USHA), empowered to make loans over a possible sixty year period, to local public agencies for slum clearance and low-cost housing and to grant subsidies for establishing the rents at a level which poor people could afford to pay.⁴² The House Committee Amendment established the income group eligible for occupancy in the projects as those whose yearly incomes did not exceed four times the

⁴⁰New York Times, 6 January 1937.

⁴¹McDonnell, The Wagner Housing Act, p. 355.

⁴²Schlesinger, The New Deal in Action, p. 54.

yearly rental.⁴³

Stein's reaction to the final passage of this bill which established housing as a permanent policy of the government was generally favourable. He remarked that within the last few years the housing movement had grown from a handful of people, largely from New York, to a movement strong enough to pass legislation. From this legislation, Stein expected, optimistically, the housing problem to be on the road to solution. The law in itself though, he felt "like most legislation of a tired Congress, is a compromise." Stein did approve, however, authority resting in the hands of one man, rather than a Board. "This centralises responsibility which is the only way to get things done", he wrote in 1937.⁴⁴ Stein could feel optimistic about responsibility lying with one man, because Nathan Straus, on whose land Hillside Homes had been built, was from New York and a close friend of the leading housing reformers, received the post. This was much against the wishes of Ickes who felt control of housing slipping away from him.⁴⁵

Stein's critique of the bill continued with the observation that the funds appropriated were ridiculously small. The \$300 million

⁴³McDonnell, The Wagner Housing Act, p. 354.

⁴⁴Clarence S. Stein, "The Wagner Housing Bill," American Art and Architecture (November 1937), p. 36.

⁴⁵Ickes, The Inside Struggle 1936-39, p. 215.

appropriated was \$200 million short of the amount requested, and in 1938 Congress did add this sum to USHA funds. Stein felt though that important progress had been made purely in the acceptance of active responsibility by the government and in the separation of the housing question from that of unemployment. The great defects of the law as Stein saw it were that the Authority had too little power, that the cost limits imposed would work against big city reconstruction where land was expensive, and that it confined the amount of new housing to an equal ratio with slum clearance which prevented an actual increase in housing. These criticisms were all thoroughly endorsed by an editorial in the New York Times, which like Stein recognised the bill as a compromise.⁴⁶

A further common criticism of the bill was that it had located the USHA in the Department of the Interior. Stein attributed the shortcomings of PWA programmes to its location in the Department of the Interior under Ickes. He stated that "suspicion and red tape and unnecessary complicated precautions have put the housing programme back at least a year. It has been the principal cause of excessively high cost of most housing built under the PWA," and feared that the USHA programmes would meet the same fate.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Editorial, New York Times, 24 August 1937.

⁴⁷ Clarence S. Stein, "The Wagner Housing Bill", American Art and Architecture (November 1937), p. 37.

In his optimism regarding the Wagner-Steagall Bill as a starting point in fundamental solutions to the housing problem, Stein overlooked the increasing conservatism of the country and overestimated the political effectiveness of those in need of housing. For, by 1937 Stein believed that housing was no longer an abstract social or economic problem, but a political issue.⁴⁸ He came to this conclusion as a result of PWA construction and the passage of the Wagner-Steagall Bill. "In the Depression helping housing, through the building industry," he wrote, "looked good even to the hard-boiled business man. The problem was no longer seen in human welfare terms." Stein further went on to say that "we are going to have governmental housing, not because of its economic soundness, or its social soundness, but because of its political soundness."⁴⁹ Although it would be for the wrong reasons, Stein felt that the partial solutions and selectivity of PWA projects would make inevitable government housing on a large scale because the political consciousness of those who had not benefited had been raised.

Stein assumed that the result of these programmes would be a mass pressure on local governments for better housing and his only concern was that it should be carried out along the right lines. However,

⁴⁸ Clarence S. Stein, "Housing: The Next Chapter" (typewritten), for the Journal of the American Institute of Architects, 24 November, 1937, p. 1., C. S. Stein Papers.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

the subsequent development of housing did not see a mass movement, and Stein was not satisfied with the lines it followed. For, although the government had finally taken a constructive step in establishing the USHA, Congress maintained control of the purse strings. Also, local authorities, (by this time over forty states had legislation based on the New York State Housing Law of 1926), were subject to conditions and restrictions laid down by the Department of the Interior. In 1961 Stein felt that the government still had no basic conception as to what it was trying to achieve with housing and planning. He wrote that "the U.S.A. aids states and cities with vast subsidies for housing, re-development, highways, and community facilities. But it seems to me there is lacking any basic conception of the kind of community, city or region that they are or should be creating."⁵⁰ Thus the initial promise of housing activities in the New Deal never provided a solution. Theoretically, and on a legislative level vast progress had been made, but it quickly became apparent that the problems arose in the implementation of these advances.

Several R. P. A. A. members were prominent in the legislative fight for the Wagner-Steagall Bill, and through them Stein had retained a close interest in it though he was not directly involved. For, ever since the construction of Sunnyside Gardens, New York City, and Radburn New Jersey, in the 1920s Stein had concentrated the major part of his

⁵⁰ Clarence S. Stein to Gordon Stephenson, Australia, 13 February 1961, C.S. Stein Papers.

attention on the actual planning and building of total communities which would fit in with the far-seeing regional plans of Benton MacKaye. Through these experiments Stein had concluded that the building of new communities, rather than the improvement of existing city conditions was the key to all future housing.

In addition to the Phipps Garden Apartments development, which was privately financed, and Hillside Homes which he built for the PWA, Stein continued his experiments very successfully at Chatham Village, outside Pittsburgh. Commenced in 1930, this project was financed by the Buhl Foundation and provided community housing for those of limited income and demonstrated the security of 100% investment in large-scale housing developments. The problems encountered at Sunnyside with home-ownership in the depression, which led to the demise of the C.H.C., had convinced Stein that a rental policy was both advisable and secure. "Experience at Chatham Village demonstrated, as compared with Sunnyside, the fallacy of the American faith, almost a religious belief, in what is called 'home-ownership,'" Stein claimed.⁵¹

In 1935 Stein was given a further opportunity to extend his activities in this field when Roosevelt appointed a Resettlement Administration under the authority of Under Secretary of Agriculture, Rexford G. Tugwell. Its functions were to "administer approved projects involving resettlement of destitute or low-income families

⁵¹ Clarence S. Stein, Toward New Towns for America, p. 85.

from rural and urban areas, including the establishment, maintenance and operation in such connection, of communities in rural and suburban areas" which pointed to the Greenbelt towns. Secondly, it was planned to "initiate and administer a program of approved projects with respect to soil erosion, stream pollution, seacoast erosion, re-forestation, forestation and flood control" which would extend projects such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) across the country.⁵²

In June, 1935, Roosevelt gave his idea of the Resettlement Administration objectives: "Alone of all the major divisions of the work-relief program [R. A.] is concerned more with the future than with the immediate present. We cannot and will not let politics enter into this work."⁵³ These were the terms in which Stein hoped the work would be viewed but with the easing of work-relief programmes after 1937 the Resettlement Administration's work was largely dismissed as a temporary expedient.

To implement the first objective of the Resettlement Administration, the Suburban Resettlement division was created. Its object was to provide work relief, increase employment and stimulate construction by promoting adequate suburban housing for low-income groups employed in industry.⁵⁴ Responsibility for the Suburban Resettlement

⁵² Clarence S. Stein, Summary Description of the Greenbelt Project (1935), p. 1, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁵³ New York Times, 21 June, 1935.

⁵⁴ Clarence S. Stein, Summary Description of the Greenbelt Project, pp. 3, 4, C. S. Stein Papers.

division was delegated to John Lansill, who was familiar with Stein's work in New York. Also, Rex Tugwell was an advocate of the Garden City idea and a friend of Stein's. "My idea," Tugwell wrote early in 1935, "is to go outside centers of population, pick up cheap land, build a whole community, and entice people into it. Then go back in the cities and tear down whole slums and make parks of them."⁵⁵ In spite of his advocacy of the Garden City idea, Stein was sceptical of Tugwell's plans and indeed only three communities were completed between 1935 and 1938.⁵⁶ To give him his due, Tugwell had planned to build thirty cities, but like Ickes, his subsidised housing programme was reduced about 75% by the President.⁵⁷

The decision to embark on the construction of suburban communities came after the Resettlement Administration had completed subsistence homestead developments started under the PWA. It then dropped fifty-six of the proposed projects and decided to concentrate on the building of autonomous cities, complete with their own industries, as a more

⁵⁵Quoted in Schlesinger, The Coming of the New Deal, C. S. Stein Papers, pp. 370, 371.

⁵⁶Clarence S. Stein, "State Planning in New York - History" 1943, C. S. Stein Papers.

"Tugwell's theories of Greenbelts were sound, but they got him nowhere, except when he was dreaming in his ivory tower." Tugwell was one of the three sponsors, the others being Louis Brownlow and Benton MacKaye, who nominated Stein to membership in the Cosmos Club in Washington.

⁵⁷New York Times, 28 September, 1935.

viable solution to rehousing problems.⁵⁸ The three towns that were ultimately built of the thirty proposed communities were Greenbelt, Maryland, thirteen miles from Washington, D.C.; Greendale, Wisconsin; and Greenhills, seven miles from Cincinnati, Ohio. None of these communities provided for more than a population of three thousand, and all consisted of one neighbourhood only. This was in contrast to Radburn, on which the plans were based, which was planned for twenty-five thousand inhabitants and several neighbourhoods. Tugwell realised this drawback and during the construction of Greenbelt he stated "we are not at this moment building to the scale we know this community ought ultimately to assume for greatest efficiency."⁵⁹

As a result of their size and proximity to large population centres, the Greenbelt towns remained as non-industrial suburban settlements. The stated aims of the Resettlement Administration regarding the Greenbelt towns, though, read like a direct statement of Stein's hopes for planned communities. The Resettlement Administration intended to obtain land on a large scale and retain it under single ownership. The next step would be the construction of a whole community to accommodate families of modest income, within an encircling greenbelt. The town would then set up a municipal government similar to others

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4 February 1936.

existing in the region. Finally, it would devise a system of rural economy co-ordinated with the land-use plan for the rural portions of the tract surrounding the suburban community.⁶⁰ The established models that incorporated these aims were the two towns that Stein had planned, Radburn and Chatham Village.

John Lansill, head of the Suburban Resettlement division asked Stein to act as planning consultant for these communities. To Stein, the major problem with these communities was the elimination of waste. His partner at Sunnyside and Radburn, Henry Wright, had carried out extensive surveys on the economics of building and had concluded that the major part of the cost came not from construction but from operation-maintenance costs.⁶¹ Stein carried out his study to ascertain the ideal size at which cities could function both efficiently and economically. He based it on the assumption of Greenbelt occupancy by families of a median income of \$1250 a year.

Stein studied the costs of local government and community activity, operation-maintenance costs of houses, amortisation and interest. He concluded that education was the most expensive factor in community life and that reductions in this sphere would bring the

⁶⁰Resettlement Administration, 1936 booklet, quoted in Clarence S. Stein to Leonard K. Elmhirst, England, 18 May 1948, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁶¹Stein, Toward New Towns for America, p. 117.

Greenbelt towns closer to low-income families.⁶² However, eventually their small size was prohibitive to the support of essential community facilities on an economic basis, as Stein had predicted. The facilities provided, though, were far superior to those of towns of equivalent size as housing enthusiast Carl H. Chatters noted, "I doubt if 1% of our population enjoys facilities in the aggregate comparable to those comprehended here."⁶³

The Greenbelt towns met with moderate success in the fulfillment of the Resettlement Administration aims. In the beginning admission to the towns was limited to those with an annual income of \$2100. This figure was gradually disregarded as homes were provided for workers in war-industries and employment and wages increased in the post-war years. The establishment of democratic municipal governments based on existing forms was achieved and maintained. In 1942 Stein was able to report that "Greenbelt, like its two sister towns, has a completely autonomous council-manager form of government, as democratic, and as independent as that of any other town in the United States."⁶⁴

Although the federal government remained the sole landlord, in spite of

⁶²Clarence S. Stein, Studies of Operation-Maintenance Costs for John Lansill (blueprint), 5 November 1935, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁶³Carl H. Chatters, Memo to Charles S. Ascher, 8 November 1935, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁶⁴Clarence S. Stein, Notes on Greenbelt Charts, 1942, C. S. Stein Papers.

its original intentions to have the land in the possession of a public agency, it did avoid Pullman's mistake of paternalism, through promoting self-government of the towns by their inhabitants.

The major flaws in the Greenbelt towns, as at Radburn, was the failure to attract industry and the unsatisfactory relation to external working places. Technically these towns grew out of the Garden City idea, and the neighbourhood unit of Clarence Perry that had been successfully integrated at Radburn. In planning a town based on past experiments and future needs and intended to fit an age of motor transport and electricity at Radburn, Stein had established a precedent and model for all future community-building. In 1948, without any self-congratulation, Stein wrote that "the form and setup of these towns comes closer than any other to that which is accepted as the basis of future city development by technicians in the various fields of town, rural and regional planning, civic architecture, engineering and building, community organisation and government."⁶⁵

The extent of the Greenbelt experiments was limited by several factors. The restrictions imposed on these projects by Roosevelt were that there should be a local need for the project, that it should provide employment for those on relief, that it should be of permanent public benefit and that the money spent should be returned eventually

⁶⁵ Clarence S. Stein, Preliminary introduction to "The Greenbelt Towns" (proposed book), 1948, C. S. Stein Papers.

to the United States Treasury.⁶⁶ Thus, the Greenbelt towns, unlike housing, remained inextricably attached to the question of unemployment relief and were regarded solely as a relief, and therefore temporary, measure. It was financed by appropriations made under the Federal Emergency Relief Act and suffered from a consequent lack of independence. A further hindrance to a concerted programme of town-building was Roosevelt's rural bias which resulted in the Resettlement Administration being taken over by the Farm Security Administration in 1937, and the concentration of the programme shifted to rural reconstruction. The Greenbelt projects were essentially successful in themselves, and overcame local opposition by real estate boards based on unfair competition.⁶⁷ They failed in that they were not adopted on a broad scale as had been hoped. The construction of these towns proved too costly to provide a solution to low-cost housing even when using relief labour. In spite of Roosevelt's statement, after an inspection of Greenbelt, that it was "an experiment that ought to be copied in every community of the United States," he did nothing to encourage further developments.⁶⁸ On a longer term Greenbelt ideas were the inspiration for the suburban developments

⁶⁶Clarence S. Stein, Summary Description of the Greenbelt Project, pp. 3, 4. C. S. Stein Papers.

⁶⁷New York Times, 1 September 1937.

⁶⁸Ibid., 14 November 1936.

of the 1950s. As the historian, Arthur Schlesinger, observed, "ironically for the Resettlement planners, when success at last took place, even in their own projects, it only completed the defeat of the original conception of an autonomous community."⁶⁹

Stein remained convinced that community and town building should be continued. He followed up his experiences with the Greenbelt towns with two projects in California. Baldwin Hills Village proved one of his most successful experiments, and fulfilled his planning ideas most completely. The second housing development Stein worked on in California was the Carmelitos Housing Project. This was a subsidised housing development for the Los Angeles Housing Authority. In this project Stein met with renewed conflict and dissatisfaction with the Washington authorities. The economies imposed by the federal government led to the abandoning of certain planning features that Stein considered essential.⁷⁰

Stein had never really come to terms with working under close supervision and centralised authority and as a result of this frustration he complained about the "unpredictable requirements" of Washington.⁷¹ Other clashes with the central authorities had

⁶⁹ Schlesinger, The Coming of the New Deal, p. 372.

⁷⁰ Clarence S. Stein to Cecil Schilling, 24 March 1939, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁷¹ Ibid., 3 April 1939, C. S. Stein Papers.

occurred consistently in the 1930s for Stein. In 1936 he wrote to Lewis Mumford describing his attempt to develop hillsides just outside Pittsburgh. "One of them would have been a guide to future public housing, if it had not been for insanely misplaced economies on the part of the Washington authorities," Stein claimed.⁷² Stein, himself, had always pushed for economy in construction, but he was not prepared to sacrifice space and good quality housing to economic pressure.

The only New Deal measure dealing with environmental matters that met with unqualified approval from Stein and his R. P. A. A. colleagues was the development of the Tennessee Valley Authority. The second objective of the Resettlement Administration was to carry out similar developments all over the country, plans which were shelved in 1937. Benton MacKaye of the R. P. A. A., who had been largely responsible for the Appalachian Trail and the 1926 New York State Plan under Stein's guidance was employed as a regional planner by the T. V. A. In both method and substance the T. V. A. put into practice R. P. A. A. ideals of the 1920s. The conception of planning used there was the same outlined in the New York State Plan in that it never drew "sharp distinctions between formulation and execution of plans. . . . Planning is part of the daily routine of

⁷²Clarence S. Stein to Lewis Mumford, 3 July 1936, C. S. Stein Papers.

getting the job done."⁷³ In effect the plan there was an evolving concept kept within broad guiding principles. MacKaye confirmed that the planning idea, formulated in Sections 22 and 23 of the Act authorising the T.V.A. in 1933, was an expression of R.P.A.A. ideology.⁷⁴

While Governor of New York, preparing for the presidential election, Roosevelt had offered only a cautious endorsement of Senator George Norris' proposal for a T.V.A., but as President he firmly favoured the public development of power resources of which T.V.A. was the culmination in 1933.⁷⁵ When T.V.A. met with opposition from private utility companies, just as housing met with opposition from vested interests, Roosevelt insisted that the government would be willing to step out of the field as soon as private capital showed that it was prepared to step in on the same basis as that on which the government operated.⁷⁶

Unlike his colleagues working with the government, MacKaye

⁷³ Clarence S. Stein, Notes on T.V.A., 24 October 1962, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁷⁴ Benton MacKaye to Aubrey Wagner, 22 February 1969, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁷⁵ Bellush, Franklin D. Roosevelt as Governor of New York, p. 16.

⁷⁶ New York Times, 29 November 1934.

described his work in the 1930s as "an era of fulfillment. For, it happened that I had had close observation of both lines of work leading to the culmination of 1933. These lines were wholly independent of each other, one working toward the familiar concept of public power and the other toward the then emerging notion of overall planning."⁷⁷ It was not only the physical benefits accruing from the T.V.A. that MacKaye saw as important but also the co-operative spirit of the enterprise.

The T.V.A. had provided the nation and the valley with an effective public service in the eyes of Stein. It had improved living conditions, electrified homes, increased income, and agriculture, industry and forests had provided jobs. Furthermore, it had provided an example and incentive for a regional pattern based on the benefits of improved technology.⁷⁸ As such, T.V.A. had fulfilled R.P.A.A. planning ideals. Stein also felt that it provided the perfect opportunity for the creation of new towns on a regional pattern. For, the organisation already included an experienced and active staff of specialists in many fields and above all its fundamental objective was public service. Consequently, Stein suggested a broad outline for a

⁷⁷Benton MacKaye to Aubrey Wagner, 22 February 1969, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁷⁸Clarence S. Stein, Notes on T.V.A., 24 October 1962, C. S. Stein Papers.

housing policy to Aubrey J. Wagner, director of T.V.A.⁷⁹ The towns built at the outset of T.V.A., to house personnel at as low a cost as possible, had been based on the Radburn model. They were completely planned communities, with town centres and a limited growth potential, which were designed for both beauty and utility.⁸⁰ However these model towns were not extended to create the true regional pattern that Stein and his colleagues were working for.

Both T.V.A and the Greenbelt towns proved to be isolated applications of the R.P.A.A. and Stein's planning ideology. The hope that they offered failed to be fulfilled in America, though their influence spread to England, just as Stein had taken his original impetus for Radburn and Greenbelt from Ebenezer Howard's garden cities. "Some of the stimulus for the present British New Towns activity came from the United States; the work of the planners of Radburn and Greenbelt, the work of the National Resources Planning Board, above all the marvellous combination of many-sided technical planning with democratic administration in the T.V.A., was not lost on the British," Mumford wrote in 1948.⁸¹

In retrospect, Stein and R.P.A.A. members tended to disregard

⁷⁹ Clarence S. Stein, Notes for a talk with Aubrey Wagner 19 October 1963, C.S. Stein Papers.

⁸⁰ Scott, American City Planning since 1890, p. 304.

⁸¹ Lewis Mumford, "The R.P.A.A. - Past and Future," June 1948, p. 4, C.S. Stein Papers.

the huge advances made in the 1930s on a national level in the fields of housing, community building, and regional planning. Given the opportunity to implement their ideas nationally by the federal government they hoped for greater advances rather than just a transference of their progress in New York in the 1920s. However, they quickly discovered that no progress was automatic and that environmental matters which were inseparable from the question of property could be opposed effectively at local levels even when sanctioned by the central government.

Stein encountered the greatest difficulty in working with an impersonal authority. Ever since 1919 he had advocated small government and grass roots democracy which influenced his town and community planning ideas. In the 1920s he had purposefully kept the R. P. A. A. small and informal for fear that bureaucracy would kill its creativity. Bureaucracy was one of the reasons that Mumford attributed to the failure of the R. P. A. A. to produce fresh initiatives in the New Deal once their original ideas had been incorporated into the establishment. "The original impetus," he claimed, "was dying: partly bogged down in bureaucratic routines, partly encountering new opposition from business interests, partly sunk in lethargy though the failure to create an adequate reservoir of ideas on which men of action could draw."

82

82Ibid.

Stein tended to blame big government rather than Roosevelt himself for the compromises of New Deal measures, though he never changed his initial reactions to the 'good actor'. There was a dichotomy, though, in Stein's thinking, for he wanted the advantages that big government could bring to community planning, but resented the bureaucracy it entailed. The advantages he saw were the ability to use experts from all fields and the scope to do things on a large scale. Yet, he felt that big government was too expensive and wasteful, that too much was spent on administration, and that it resulted in lack of initiative or new ideas due to the end of individualism. The advantages of a moderate size, in both towns and government, were that it was more democratic and the administration was closer to the problems and therefore more effective.⁸³ Stein had made this conclusion as a result of his experience with the impersonality of the New Deal administration, but he never actually established the exact ideal size for an economically and politically viable town.

While Stein blamed bureaucracy and big government for all the disappointments of the New Deal, Mumford planted the blame squarely with Roosevelt. "If there had been greater vision in Washington in the thirties," he claimed, "we all would have been used more effectively than we were. That is a great pity, for it might have prevented the housing movement and the planning movement from getting lost in a

⁸³ Clarence S. Stein, "Government in a Metropolitan Area," June 1953, C. S. Stein Papers.

bog of compromises and retreats."⁸⁴ Mumford admired Roosevelt but was resentful of his unpredictability and considered him as a "wily all-too-wily politician" who, if he chose to support a measure could ensure its success as with the T. V. A. and bypass bureaucratic processes.⁸⁵ Thus, Mumford felt that if Roosevelt had been really sincere about the provision of low-cost housing, separate from unemployment relief, there would not have been a two and half year fight for a compromised Wagner-Steagall Bill, nor would the Greenbelt project have been limited to three model communities.

Nevertheless, the New Deal had established the legislative and practical groundwork for solutions to housing problems. The background for these measures had been established in New York before the war, and continued through the 1920s by the close co-operation of Al Smith and Stein. The optimism of Stein and the R. P. A. A. was enhanced by the conditions of the depression in the early 1930s which made government involvement in housing inevitable. It was the increasingly conservative mood of the country with economic recovery that contributed greatly to the compromise of their ideas in the New Deal, for without the need for unemployment relief and special measures for business recovery their plans were no longer politically advantageous.

⁸⁴ Lewis Mumford to Clarence S. Stein, 7 December 1947, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁸⁵ Lewis Mumford to Clarence S. Stein, 25 August 1964, C. S. Stein Papers.

CONCLUSION

Since the 1850s individuals had been tackling the problems created by a rapidly urbanising and industrialising country, and in the Progressive period these problems became recognised in the political sphere. However, it was not until the crisis of World War I that these problems became the target of concerted solutions by both individual reformers and the government. Stein's most active and innovative work coincided both with the radical change in government policy towards housing and the establishment of regional planning as a solution in the years 1919-1939. Stein remained active in both these fields into the 1960s but his later work was based on his innovative achievements under Al Smith in New York and Franklin D. Roosevelt nationally.

Although Stein did not achieve the full extent of his aims, his work and that of his colleagues laid the basis for all future housing solutions and regional development. More important in measuring their progress is the extent to which they advanced from their predecessors' and contemporaries' solutions to environmental problems. The emergency conditions produced by World War I and the depression demanded radical solutions which Stein and other New York reformers were able to provide. These solutions were tempered once they had

alleviated emergency conditions, but even when compromised their ideas came closer to providing a solution to a still-existent problem than any that their contemporaries could offer.

The extent of Stein's failure is obvious for the slum problem still exists, the lowest-paid workers still cannot afford decent housing, and housing has never achieved the status of a public utility. Stein's failure was partially a result of the continuous shifting between laissez-faire and welfare-state policies by the government, but also a result of his own inability to adapt to the conditions of big government that were necessary to implement his policies. Nevertheless, Stein prompted great advances in both technical and legislative solutions to housing and planning problems.

Prior to World War I the only role that government played in housing problems was that of regulator, exemplified in the 1901 Tenement House Law of Lawrence Veiller. Initially New York was the only state to progress from restrictive measures by issuing incentives to builders and private enterprise through tax exemption. In 1919 federal war housing provided an example and precedent for possibilities in ameliorating living conditions but, at that point, it did not in any way change the prevailing attitude which abhorred government involvement in a private business. However, as a result of this experiment, Stein with the support of Al Smith, fought for a permanent government housing policy. The result of this was the extremely influential 1926 New York State Housing Act which provided for financial aid to limited dividend corporations and opened

the way to federal aid to the cities.

When the federal government did take action in the housing sphere in 1932 New York was the only state qualified to benefit from this program. Within five years, though, New York's policy had been adopted in more than forty states. Without New York's lead the federal housing programme would have taken far longer to get off the ground. Also, by 1937, the housing question had become an integral part of government, thus assuring that it would receive some attention and providing a permanent base for future solutions.

In the space of twenty years, the federal government had moved from a regulatory stance which fitted laissez-faire politics to one of constructive aid, which included direct construction and both direct and indirect financial aid to private and public housing. This change in policy was due largely to the work of Stein under Al Smith in New York. At the time, Stein felt that his goal had been achieved, and was optimistic that the housing movement would be carried by its own momentum to a solution. However, although the Wagner-Steagall Bill established the legal base for the federal programme, it failed to fulfill its potential. After its inception in 1937 the opposition to this bill proved stronger and more widespread in practice than the support of its advocates who had instituted it in the face of this very opposition.

More than any other factor the depression opened the way for government intervention in housing. This opportunity would have been

lost if Stein and his colleagues had not been ready with a programme. With increasing prosperity housing was "subjected to a fusillade of abuse from real-estate groups: public housing was socialistic, it was unfair competition to private enterprise."¹ The continuing opposition to the Wagner—Steagall Bill also included business groups, builders, suppliers, and mortgage lenders of single-family houses and property-owners associations, who all saw government housing as a threat, rather than a supplement, to free enterprise.² Thus, in the legislative sphere Stein won his fight for government responsibility, but when the mood of the government and country swung back to conservatism it became evident how far this victory could be nullified.

Another lasting advance that Stein achieved was in the technical aspect of housing and planning. In the 1920s Stein culled the best and soundest ideas from his predecessors' work and synthesized them within an overall philosophy of regionalism. He brought together the isolated measures that had been applied piecemeal to various elements of environmental problems and moulded them into an overall concept in which housing and planning were inter-related. The most important influences that he combined in his work were those of

¹Daniel Seligman, "The Enduring Slums," in The Exploding Metropolis, eds. The Editors of Fortune, pp. 105, 106.

²Robert Moore Fisher, Twenty Years of Public Housing. Economic Aspects of the Federal Program (New York: Harper and Bros., 1959), p. 21.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Patric Geddes, Gifford Pinchot, Ebenezer Howard, and Clarence Perry. The combination of these ideas resulted in his supervision of the 1926 New York State Plan and the construction of the town of Radburn. These two concepts were emulated in the New Deal in the T.V.A. and Greenbelt towns. Stein envisaged these two concepts, if combined, as the real solution to America's environmental problems.

That is, Stein thought if whole geographical regions could be completely planned physically, socially, and economically and could incorporate regional cities based on the plans for Radburn, then a whole new democratic society would emerge. Although this regional pattern never developed and the planned city and the planned region were never fully combined, these two strands developed by Stein and his colleagues continued to gain recognition and be influential in their own spheres.

The large-scale constructions and planned environs of Radburn became a characteristic of all government building in subsequent years, whether of neighbourhood reconstruction in inner-city areas or construction on vacant land outside the cities. Nor was Radburn's influence confined to America, for it served also as a model for the British New Towns which required plans for an automobile age.³

³ Ebenezer Howard's garden cities were based on plans for pedestrians within the city, with the railway providing inter-city travel.

Planning technicians recognised it as a standard for all building and Benton MacKaye wrote that the "Radburn plan had worldwide influence on the form of cities. In Sweden, Israel, India, and Canada, whole communities are being built according to this conception."⁴ Radburn's main influence was in its establishment of the possibility of providing good housing at a medium cost. From Stein's point of view this technical success was modified by its failure to lower costs sufficiently to house the lowest paid workers and the fact that its influence was divorced from the idea of regional development.

The idea of cohesive regional development was almost unknown before Stein and the R. P. A. A. worked for its advancement in the 1920s. Through the Commission of Housing and Regional Planning of New York State Stein achieved a legislative framework for planning on a state-wide basis. In 1925 the New York State legislature instituted a State Federation of Planning Boards to assist in the planning of regions, and in 1934 Governor Herbert H. Lehman appointed a New York State Planning Board.⁵ In the same year the federal government appointed a National Resources Planning Board to co-ordinate the activities of the state boards, thereby broadening the scope of planning potentialities

⁴Benton MacKaye to the Committee on Admissions, Cosmos Club, 26 April 1961, C. S. Stein Papers.

⁵Clarence S. Stein, "State Planning in New York - History," 1943, C. S. Stein Papers.

and making large-scale regional development of resources possible. From its beginnings with Stein and Al Smith in New York in the 1920s, the idea of environmental planning gained credence quickly at all levels of government. In both housing and regional planning Stein initiated new methods whose application became standard in the future solution of environmental problems. These advances indicated not only Stein's talent and grasp of the needs demanded by industrial life, but also the growing strength of the co-operative method he employed over that of unchecked individual enterprise.

In the same way that Stein borrowed from the technical expertise of his predecessors, so his methods and goals of work linked him to a past tradition. Like the reformers prior to World War I, Stein's ideals included an emphasis on the attainment of a true democracy in which all could participate. Stein felt that environmental amelioration, together with education, was the most important factor in achieving this goal. In his work he further endorsed Progressive beliefs in scientific management, the elimination of waste and the use of experts. Stein's work in New York in the 1920s with the housing commissions, where he relied greatly on the help of settlement house leaders such as Mary Simkhovitch, and his formation of the R. P. A. A. provided a continuous ideological link between the housing and planning reforms of the Progressive period and the New Deal.

Although most of the R. P. A. A. members were just starting their careers when they first met, Edith Elmer Wood,

Catherine Bauer, and Benton MacKaye provided personal links with earlier housing and planning workers. The urban historian, Roy Lubove, extends the line of development which the R. P. A. A. continued even further back. He writes that "it [R. P. A. A.] climaxed the efforts launched in the late nineteenth century to establish public controls over urban form and land-use."⁶ The support of Governor Al Smith and Senator Wagner assured the growth of this ideology in New York even when the national economic situation was unfavourable to it. Wagner was active with social legislation in the Progressive period and continued his social concern in the 1920s allied with Al Smith and the settlement workers.⁷ The Wagner-Steagall Bill of 1937 was the result of this same combination of politician and social reformers that had been active with constructive social legislation before the war.

An analysis of Stein's work serves to show the importance of this alliance and its achievements in New York under Al Smith in making possible governmental responsibility regarding housing on a national level in the 1930s. Indeed Roosevelt himself admitted to Frances Perkins that "practically all the things we've done in the federal government are like things Al Smith did as Governor of

⁶Lubove, The Urban Community, p. 21.

⁷J. Joseph Huthmacher, Senator Robert F. Wagner and the Rise of Urban Liberalism, (New York: Atheneum Press, 1968), p. 85.

New York."⁸ In terms of housing this was certainly true in view of legislation that passed and those in the forefront of the housing and planning measures that were adopted. The size of New York had exacerbated urban problems, making them evident before they became as apparent in smaller cities. As a result, since the early days of Progressivism, New York had been the pace-setter for housing reform.⁹ In spite of the initiation of government responsibility for the welfare of its citizens in New York and Roosevelt's transference of this ideology to a national level in 1933, both he and Al Smith showed a strongly conservative strain.

With Roosevelt this conservatism hindered the full implementation of Stein's housing programmes. Both men's support of Stein eventually appeared to be politically rather than ideologically motivated. Neither supported Stein to the extent that they would be prepared to antagonise the business class or fundamentally attack the capitalist system. Smith "had never been opposed to business; he had never been a socialist; his progressivism had been limited to administrative reforms, social welfare legislation, and the increasing regulation of public power resources, ameliorative measures on the whole, hardly calculated to endanger the capitalist system."¹⁰

⁸Quoted in Caro, The Power Broker, p. 330.

⁹Mark I. Gelfand, A Nation of Cities - The Federal Government and Urban America, 1933-1965(New York: Oxford University Press, 1975)p. 61.

¹⁰Josephson, Al Smith: Hero of the Cities, p. 371.

Governor Smith's lack of commitment was shown by his support of ideologically opposed solutions to urban problems.

Likewise, Roosevelt's reforms were motivated by political expediency rather than a fundamental wish to change the social and economic structure of society. This inherent conservatism only became apparent with the upturn of the economy after 1936 and the growing conservative opposition to the New Deal which threatened his re-election. In both leaders the conservative strain was brought out in times of political contest and economic prosperity. Thus, the initial optimism of Stein and his colleagues in working with successive administrations which supported government intervention in environmental and property matters was quickly thwarted by the limits that Smith and Roosevelt imposed on the extent of their proposed involvement.

With more whole-hearted support from Roosevelt the scope of Stein's programmes might well have reached their full potential. However, the conservative strain in both the public and the government tended to predominate in the years 1919 to 1939. Stein and his colleagues made advances with their ideology only when crisis conditions prevailed, as after World War I and in the early 1930s. Government involvement was acceptable to a majority only "when it became evident that private capital had failed to meet the emergency."¹¹ The

¹¹ cf. Chapter 2, p.44, (note 16).

establishment of government housing in the 1930s resulted from its initiation as a relief measure rather than from any radical change in attitude from 1919. Yet, once established, government housing became an integral part of subsequent administrations. Not the least of Stein's achievements was in establishing government responsibility for public housing as the only real solution in the face of alternatives offered since 1901 by such as Lawrence Veiller, Robert Moses, the Russell Sage Foundation, and proponents of the F.H.A., under the politically-oriented administrations of Al Smith and Roosevelt.

Certainly the government did not abandon private enterprise and its encouragement when it adopted public housing. Rather, the two lines of growth were nurtured side by side by the federal government. In consequence of its catering moderately to all, the New Deal received criticisms from both the left-wing and the right-wing in its aid of private building and subsidies for public low-rent housing. Advocates of private enterprise maintained that government should abandon its role in public housing, whereas Stein and his colleagues felt that the public housing programme had been compromised and therefore lost its ability to solve the housing problem. The compromise appeased but did not please either side.

Overall, between 1919 and 1939, Stein had revolutionised the technical and governmental aspects regarding housing and planning. His solutions were hindered by the fact that "Americans have not yet decided what kind of urban society they want and what role they

wish the Federal Government to play in creating it." ¹² Through a combination of this ambivalence in American society and government regarding the role of government where property is involved and his own inability to cut building costs effectively, Stein failed to reach his goal of providing adequate housing for the lowest-income groups as a public utility. Housing remained a political issue and those in need never acquired sufficient force in political argument to press the issue. Similarly, Stein's hopes for a peaceful revolution involving the redistribution of wealth and a change in fundamental values, through the recreation of the environment never materialised. The capitalist ethic remained more powerful than the social impulse as a social and political basis.

Stein did, however, bring housing partially out of the speculative sphere into that of government concern. Although all government housing remained bound by conservative decrees, he had broken a barrier in establishing it as a part of national policy. This achievement provided a firm foundation for future solutions. In 1919 the government had endorsed certain regulatory measures without having the means to enforce them. By 1939 the government provided constructive aid and financed public and private housing both indirectly and directly. In this same period Stein also established the idea of social and environmental planning as a function of government.

¹² Gelfand, A Nation of Cities, p. xiii.

Initially seen as "socialistic" the need for such schemes quickly overrode any effective opposition and consolidated the acceptance of governmental responsibility in spheres where private enterprise was ineffective.

Technically, Stein promoted the idea of large-scale building and planning with the land under single ownership. This method was widely adopted by local, state, and federal governments in their housing operations. In a predominantly individualistic, laissez-faire society, Stein succeeded in carrying on an opposing social tradition born in the nineteenth century, and in taking the opportunities offered under Al Smith and Roosevelt to solve urban problems through governmental action. The extent of this achievement can only be measured by comparison to earlier efforts and contemporary alternatives and not by the continuing existence of environmental problems.

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