Today. The article asserts that the public housing bill recently passed by the House would return a sense of stability and work ethic to American communities. In fact, the author argues that to leave the current system of public housing intact is ''only to punish the poor in the name of protecting them.''

In anticipation of House consideration of the conference report on the House and Senate public housing bills later this year, I commend the attached article to Member's attention.

[USA Today, June 18, 1997]

WORKING-CLASS ETHIC MADE PUBLIC HOUSING PROUD; IT COULD AGAIN

By Samuel G. Freedman

On a frigid morning in January 1949, about 500 people lined up, shivering but stoic, to apply for apartments in the first low-income-housing project to be built in New Rochelle, N.Y. War veterans still bunking with relatives, Italian laborers barely recovered from the Depression, blacks working as maids or drivers for the affluent—all had been waiting years for this chance.

None of them saw residence in the Robert Hartley Houses as anything but a privilege, and a privilege that connoted responsibilities. They had to produce wedding licenses and military-discharge papers; they had to submit to a virtual whiteglove evaluation of their housekeeping skills.

And for 240 families who passed muster, there was the rule book. The rule book specified the week each tenant was required to sweep the stairwell and the type of pushpin acceptable for hanging pictures. It dictated the fines for a child who walked across the grass. Where the rule book left off, the building superintendents picked up, enforcing an unofficial curfew for teen-agers with 11 p.m. knocks on the door.

The social compact established in the Hartley Houses and scores of similar developments made public housing one of New Deal liberalism's greatest successes for a time. Hartley was integrated by race and religion and animated by the ethics of hard work and upward mobility. As late as 1964, a single mugging in the complex of five buildings was rare enough to make news.

Just about that time, however, two devastating changes were taking place. The first generation of Hartley residents, having climbed into the working class, moved out, partly because their incomes exceeded the project's upward limits for tenants. Simultaneously, the wave of litigation that came to be known as the ''rights revolution'' began destroying the honorable bargain between the taxpayers who funded the welfare state and the tenants who enjoyed its benefits.

Individually, the court cases that undermined public housing seemed reasonable enough. They won the rights of various types of people, from political radicals to single parents to welfare clients, to be permitted into public housing and to stave off eviction from it.

Collectively, however, these cases taught the managers of public-housing projects—whether run by the federal government or, like the Hartley Houses, by state and local agencies—that screening current or prospective tenants invited costly litigation. The doors of public housing swung open as long as one was poor enough to qualify.

By the early 1980s, then, the Hartley Houses had gone from a stepladder for the working poor to a sinkhole of the welfare poor, with 85% of the households headed by a single parent and relying on public aid. The local housing authority defaulted on loan payments to the state. An $11 million program of repairs had to be halted due to rampant vandalism. Drug use and violent crime grew so brazen that in 1990 the tenants themselves asked the city to declare a state of emergency in the project.

Sadly, there is nothing new in the saga of the Hartley Houses. It is the story of the Robert Taylor Homes in Chicago, a vast project known locally as ''the world's biggest mistake,'' and of the Flag Houses in Baltimore, which will be razed in 2000. One of its predecessors in demolition, the Columbus Houses in Newark, N.J., had been pronounced by a federal inspector unfit even for animals. And who has lost, after all, in the failure of public housing? In a political sense, liberals have. But day by day, the poor have. They are the ones isolated and beleaguered; they are the ones left to beg for martial law.

So liberals and Democrats, including President Clinton, should not be so quick to dismiss the public-housing bill recently passed by the House of Representatives and headed for the Senate simply because it is the handiwork of the same conservative Republicans who designed the punitive welfare-reform law. The lesson of that law, in fact, is that when liberals refuse to reform failed social programs, they leave correction, by default, to the right.

The housing bill has its flaws, particularly in its intention to alter the Section 8 program that already succeeds in using market incentives with private landlords to distribute poor tenants throughout metropolitan areas rather than concentrating them in bleak, highrise projects. But in direct ways, the measure would restore public housing to its original ideal of placing the fabric of community above the rights of the individual. Among its provisions, the bill would streamline the eviction of dangerous tenants, refuse housing to those with proven histories of sexual violence or substance abuse, and give housing officials unprecedented access to national criminal records in screening applicants.

Most importantly of all, moderate-income tenants would be permitted to rent apartments at market rates alongside the poor. In the heyday of public housing, it was working-class families that established the value system of places like the Hartley Houses. Their return can again provide a critical mass of stability and work ethic.

There is a reason many middle-aged blacks speak almost witfully about the segregated neighborhoods of their childhood. Those neighborhoods, walled in by white racism, contained all the social classes, from the hod carrier to the teacher to the dentist. With fairhousing laws came black flight, transforming ghetto into slum.

If some of the workers still in the central cities can be enticed by decent rents to live in public housing, then no one will benefit from their presence more than their impoverished neighbors. It is not sufficient to say, as opponents of the housing bill have, that the needlest people stand to lose. There already are huge waiting lists for public housing, and the federal government has gotten out of the business of building low-income projects. To leave the current system intact is only to punish the poor in the name of protecting them.

PENNSYLVANIA SHERIFF'S ASSOCIATION 75TH ANNIVERSARY

HON. PHIL ENGLISH

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 1997

Mr. ENGLISH of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Pennsylvania Sheriff's Association on its 75th anniversary. For 75 years, this association and the sheriffs of Pennsylvania have worked together to improve the office of sheriff so as to better serve the public. Under the dynamic leadership of Butler County sheriff, Dennis Rickard, the association has continued providing a forum for the sheriffs to exchange ideas and experience and provide training and education programs for sheriffs and their deputies. It has done this to ensure that every sheriff has the skills and knowledge to perform his or her duties in a professional, responsible, and efficient manner.

We all know the law and legal procedures have become infinitely more complicated than they were 75 years ago. The increase in volume of work has also imposed more burdens on Pennsylvania's sheriffs.

The association has helped our sheriffs shoulder these burdens in a manner that has reflected well on Pennsylvania. Because of this, I want to congratulate the Pennsylvania Sheriff's Association on its 75th anniversary and commend it and Pennsylvania's sheriffs, for a job well done.

IN HONOR OF GEORGE J. KOURPIAS

HON. SAM GEJDENSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 1997

Mr. GEJDENSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a great friend of working people throughout the world: George J. Kourpias is retiring tomorrow from his post as president of the International Association of Machinists; he will be deeply missed.

As president of the Machinists, Mr. Kourpias has served as a member of several governmental and labor organizations. In particular, I would like to note his service on the board of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, also known as OPIC. I have fought throughout my career for increasing the export capabilities of our Nation's businesses. At the same time, I have been concerned that we do not trample on labor rights as we make American business more competitive. That is why I was so pleased when President Clinton appointed Mr. Kourpias to the board 4 years ago. This vital organization for the first time has a working voice on the board. We can learn a lot from that example.

Mr. Kourpias also has done tremendous work for our senior citizens, working both with the Secretary of Health and Human Services and the National Council of Senior Citizens to ensure the retirement savings of our retirees.

Mr. Kourpias' dedication to improving the lives of working Americans goes back long before he achieved the highest post with the Machinists. Before his term as president began, he served as vice president at the Machinists, overseeing the National Capital region. As an expert on the IAM's governing document, Mr. Kourpias has been of great help to Presidents before him. Learning the details has always been important to Mr. Kourpias, same as the details are important in the work of the machinists he represents.

His leadership has been clear to the world since the 1950's when he first began taking leadership positions in the union movement.