

# LABOR AND HOUSING IN NEW YORK CITY

## ARCHITECT HERMAN JESSOR AND THE COOPERATIVE HOUSING MOVEMENT

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### INTRODUCTION

When architect Herman Jessor (1894-1990) closed his office in 1980, he ended a 60-year career that was notable not only for its longevity but for its consistency and productivity as well. From the Amalgamated Cooperative Apartments of 1927 through Co-op City and Starrett City in the 1970s, Jessor designed over 40,000 limited-equity cooperative apartments for New York City's working families, making him the most prolific architect of middle income housing in the city's history. He was an unabashed advocate of two much maligned developments in American architecture and urbanism — the tower-in-the-park and "slum clearance" urban renewal. His success with these approaches was due to several factors: The availability of public subsidies, the collective strength of organized labor, a strong industrial economy with decent wages, and a client committed to the ideals of the cooperative movement.

His client was the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (ACW) and, later, the United Housing Foundation (UHF), a non-profit organization created by the ACW and other labor, civic and housing groups in 1951 to promote consumer cooperatives, notably housing. The program was limited-equity cooperative housing, a tenure model where tenant-owners buy apartments at low per room prices but do not realize a profit on resale, made affordable by tax abatements, low-interest mortgages, and Jessor's cost-conscious design.

This study yields two findings. It demonstrates that the creation of a successful urban community is a function of the interplay of physical design and social organization, and is not solely dependant on building typology. And it traces the declining power of organized labor in New York City as measured by two events: The withdrawal of UHF from the housing development field because wage increases did not keep pace with rising housing costs; and by the preference of many current residents to sell their units on the open market rather than retain them as subsidized coops, a triumph of the market economy over the cooperative ideal.

### THE AMALGAMATED HOUSING CORPORATION Getting Started

While the history of cooperative housing in New York City may be traced to a group of Finnish cooperatives

built in the Sunset Park area of Brooklyn starting in 1916, the greatest number of early cooperatives were built in the Bronx in the 1920s by Jewish needle trades workers aligned through various political, religious, and workplace affiliations. The most successful of these efforts was the Amalgamated Cooperative Apartments built by the Amalgamated Clothing Workers Union (ACW) from 1927-1930. The driving force behind the union's effort was Abraham E. Kazan (1889-1971), head of the ACW Credit Union. Inspired by the experience of the Rochdale weavers, a profit-sharing consumer cooperative movement founded in England in 1844, Kazan developed the cooperative housing model as an extension of that idea. Under his charismatic leadership, the ACW spawned an entire network of cooperative programs, starting with the credit union, but including as well coop groceries, milk deliveries, pharmacies, and opticians; a furniture cop, insurance programs, and even coop power plants.

Kazan's contribution to housing was the concept of non-profit, limited equity cooperative apartments, based on seven principles of cooperation: open membership; one member-one vote; savings returned to members in proportion to their patronage; neutrality in religion and politics; limited return on investment; constant education; and constant expansion (UHF 1971, 6). In a limited-equity coop, tenant-owners buy apartments for modest down-payments but do not increase their equity with monthly mortgage payments. When they leave, they sell the apartments back to the sponsor for their initial equity plus interest earned. The apartments are thus valued for their ongoing use as habitation rather than their potential speculative value as a commodity, a distinguishing factor between limited-equity and private market coops.

The housing effort got off the ground in 1925 when ACW President Sidney Hillman joined forces with other unions, and architects including Clarence Stein, to lobby New York Governor Al Smith for a state-assisted housing program. This campaign culminated with passage of the State Housing Act of 1926, authorizing municipalities to give 20-year tax exemptions for improvements to land developed by limited-dividend corporations who restricted profits to 6 percent. To take advantage of the law's provisions, the ACW immediately established the Amalgamated Housing Corp. (AHC) as the first limited-dividend company in the state, with Kazan as president. Using money pooled from Kazan and his circle to make a

down payment on land near Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx and a \$1.2 million mortgage from the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, the first project was launched. The *Jewish Daily Forward* pledged \$150,000 as a credit fund for the union to lend to members who did not have the equity required under the provisions of the state law. The firm of Springsteen and Goldhammer, known for their garden apartment work in the Bronx, was selected as architects and over the next several years eight buildings were constructed on the Bronx site. The Amalgamated Apartments, as they are known, consisted of six- and seven-story brick, Tudor-style walk-up buildings surrounding handsomely landscaped central courtyards. The complex is distinguished by a wide array of social and educational facilities including a daycare center, library, classrooms, art studios, and a community hall.

The success of the Amalgamated development was reported to Franklin Roosevelt, then governor of New York, who directed his lieutenant governor, Herbert Lehman, to assist with the duplication of this effort in the slum areas of the Lower East Side. This led to the union's second undertaking, Amalgamated Dwellings, on Grand Street. These 236 apartments are perhaps the union's finest architectural achievement, constituting a perimeter block surrounding an interior court, with a handsome community room at the head of the court. Designed by a Hungarian architect in the Springsteen and Goldhammer office, the brickwork and geometries reflect expressionist work then current in Holland, Germany, and Vienna. Completed in 1930, the project received the medal for design excellence from the NYC chapter of the AIA in the class of 6-story apartment houses.

### Chief Draftsman Herman Jessor

It was in this milieu of housing experimentation and union activism that Herman Jessor began his architectural career. Born in the Ukraine in 1894, Jessor emigrated with his grandparents in 1906. He went to Stuyvesant High School and then to Cooper Union, where he worked days in an architectural office and studied civil engineering at night. His Cooper training kept him stateside during World War I when he was a reinforced concrete design engineer for the Bethlehem Shipbuilding Company. Jessor's strong technical background enabled him to rise quickly in the firm to the position of chief draftsman. Sympathetic as well to the union's social ideals, Jessor thus began an association that was to extend for over half a century.

With Springsteen and Goldhammer Jessor worked on the Amalgamated buildings and also the first building of the United Workers Cooperative Colony, on Allerton Avenue on the Bronx, sponsored by a group of communist garment industry workers. As chief draftsman on this project, Jessor was approached by people from the Coops, as the buildings were called, who encouraged him to open his own office and design a second building for them on his own. Jessor accepted the commission and in 1927 opened his first office, although he recalled working with Springsteen and Goldhammer on the Amalgamated Dwellings completed in 1930 (Jessor, 1989).

During the Depression, Jessor went to sea with the merchant marine and ran an orchard in Pennsylvania. He

worked briefly on Red Hook Houses, New York's first federally funded public housing project, in the office of Alfred Easton Poor, and then on the 1939 New York World's Fair with the firm of Shreve, Lamb & Harmon. After the War, Jessor went back to work with George W. Springsteen, whose partnership with Goldhammer had dissolved during the Depression. Jessor served as chief draftsman, running the office when Springsteen became ill in the early 1950s, and opening his own office after Springsteen's death in 1954. Over the next twenty years, Jessor turned out an extraordinary quantity of work for Kazan and the UHF, designing and supervising the construction of over 35,000 apartments in a string of large scale housing cooperatives culminating with the giant Co-op City project in the Bronx and Starrett City in Queens, which started out as a UHF project called Twin Pines.

### THE UNITED HOUSING FOUNDATION Urban Renewal

After the war the AHC resumed its work in the Bronx, constructing three more buildings at the Amalgamated Apartments to bring the total number of units there to 1,435. But the new thrust of their work was the Lower East Side. Their new ally was Robert Moses, the housing member of the New York City Planning Commission, NYC Construction Coordinator, and chairman of Mayor O'Dwyer's Postwar Works Program and his Committee on Slum Clearance (Schwartz 1993). Impressed by the AHC's success with apartments in the Bronx and the Lower East Side, he enlisted their expertise in a large scale slum clearance program to replace thousands of units of old-law tenements with bright new apartment buildings. With Moses' enthusiastic support, the AHC constructed three more apartment buildings on Grand Street, named Hillman Houses after the former union leader.

Following passage of the National Housing Act in 1949 this effort took on new dimensions. Title I of this act, the urban renewal program, provided federal assistance for land acquisition and relocation costs, and, with Moses paving the way for continued city tax abatements, the AHC was ready to take on projects at a larger scale. To provide a more substantial financial and political base, the ACW brought in other unions, civic organizations, and housing cooperatives — 62 in all — to form the United Housing Foundation, with Kazan as the first President. It was to the fledgling UHF that the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) turned in 1951 to be the sponsor of a new housing development they wanted to construct at the end of Grand Street on the East River.

Known initially as the Corlears Hook Redevelopment Project, this was the first project in the country to use Title I funds for land acquisition. Comprising 1,672 units on 13 acres, East River Houses (also known as ILGWU Cooperative Village) marked the eastern boundary of a series of projects on Grand Street now known collectively as "Co-op Village." At the dedication ceremony the luminaries on the dais reflected the importance of this effort not only to the city but to the state and the nation as well. It was the lead effort in what its sponsors hoped

would be a transformative era in American urbanism — the eradication of slums. With David Dubinsky, President of the IGLWU, presiding, the list of dignitaries included former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, AFL-CIO President George Meany, New York Senators Herbert Lehman and Irving Ives, Robert Moses, Abraham Kazan, Manhattan Borough President Hulan Jack and Mayor Robert Wagner, all serenaded with music by the Department of Sanitation Band!

During the development of the ILGWU Cooperative Village Jessor assumed responsibility for running the office, performing all the UHF work from that point forward. This included two additional urban renewal projects: Seward Park, with 1,728 apartments in four buildings on Grand Street completed in 1961; and Penn South, 2,820 apartments in ten buildings completed in 1963 for the ILGWU on 20 acres in Chelsea just south of Pennsylvania Station. Although forced relocation imposed by urban renewal had its critics, the union involvement demonstrated that the program was not a nefarious scheme imposed unilaterally by Moses but a strategy that enjoyed considerable support among liberals (Schwartz 1993). The participation of President John F. Kennedy at the Penn South dedication testified to the continued strength of organized labor as a political force.

The UHF was not always successful in gaining clearance for its urban renewal projects. Proposed developments for a Seward Park extension and for Cooper Square and Delancey Street on the Lower East Side were abandoned for lack of support among government agencies (UHF 1971).

While certainly correct in their conviction that their new apartment buildings were far superior to the dilapidated old-law tenements so despised by Kazan (Goodwin 1963), the UHF underplayed the difficulties faced by the relocated tenants. Although site tenants were offered priority in the new UHF housing, the coops required a down payment and room rent that poorer families were unable to meet. The UHF promoted affordable housing for working people, but they opposed the inclusion of subsidized units for the poor in their developments. In the words of UHF Vice President George Schechter, "We are opposed to rent supplements in a cooperative because we believe each individual must make his own commitment. We will not have people who are tenants of the Housing Authority" ("Co-op City," 1968, p. 42).

The primary mission of the UHF, however, was not urban renewal but housing production, and it continued to organize and build cooperative communities throughout the city. In 1958 on a site in the Bronx near their earlier Amalgamated apartments, the UHF opened the Park Reservoir Housing Corporation apartments, the first project built under New York State's Limited-Profit Housing Companies Law of 1955. Known as "Mitchell-Lama" for its two sponsors, this law established the N.Y.S. Housing Finance Agency to provide low-interest bond-backed mortgages for limited-dividend housing developers, with authorization for municipal tax abatement as well.

Mitchell-Lama was the source of funds for the UHF's three largest projects: Rochdale Village, with 5,860 units

in twenty buildings occupying 120 acres built on the site of the old Jamaica Race Track in central Queens, completed in 1965; Co-op City, 15,382 units in 35 buildings occupying 300 acres in the northeast Bronx, completed in 1972; and Twin Pines (Starrett City), 5,881 apartments in 43 buildings on 150 acres in southern Brooklyn, completed in 1975. These three projects shared another salient characteristic other than size — they were all built on unoccupied land, and occasioned no relocation of site tenants.

## Housing Design

The design parameters for the cooperative housing were set by Kazan, who was adamant that the first priority in this cost conscious enterprise should be the apartment interior. The basic design prototype was developed by Jessor's mentor Springsteen: double-and triple-cross shaped buildings with the living rooms in the interior corners and the bedrooms on the outside corners where tired workers could get cross ventilation; windowed eat-in kitchens and entry foyers in each apartment. The Amalgamated apartments built in the 1920s were six- and seven-story walk-ups with stairwell access from landscaped courtyards. In the 1950s the UHF switched to elevator-access high-rise construction to increase density while preserving open space, which grew as a percentage of site area from an average of 50 percent in the early projects to nearly 80 percent at Co-op City. Jessor's innovations were the balconies and bay windows, starting with East River Houses, but for the most part his contribution to design was in the form of conceptual design and basic principles, not detailed development. He did not spend time at the drafting board. Apartment layouts were done by chief draftsman Gerhard Graupe, known for his tiny, precise freehand sketches of apartment layouts, all variations of the original prototypes descended from Springsteen.

Jessor believed in modern technology, citing the advantages of mechanical ventilation for bathrooms in increasing the distance between exterior wall and corridor, although he maintained the windowed eat-in kitchen. Until Co-op City, the UHF buildings minimized corridor length by adopting a cross-shaped plan with a central circulation core. This floor plate also permitted most apartments to have cross ventilation, even though the corridors were double-loaded. At Co-op City, pushed to vary the building configurations because of the scale of the project, Jessor designed a slightly-curved slab building with long double-loaded corridors and a lot of single-orientation units.

Jessor's strengths were the legal and technical aspects of construction. He was adept at complex zoning issues and negotiations with regulatory agencies and provided exacting supervision on the construction site, a vital skill because the UHF acted as their own General Contractor. Even Jessor's detractors recognized his expertise in construction. A colleague of Jessor's on the AIA Housing Committee who advocated higher standards for housing felt that Jessor's insistence on speed and economy compromised design quality (Lebduska 1994). But he acknowledged that Jessor knew how to build — how to pack vents, handle fire resistance and sound stopping; his engineers were masters at basic systems, which enabled

Jessor to bring in his projects at lower cost than most.

## HERMAN J. JESSOR, ARCHITECT

Jessor ran a racially integrated office and hired on basis of qualifications. Many of the architects who worked with him shared his social views and his commitment to quality housing at moderate prices. In late sixties, workers in his office led by Morris Zeitlin and Howard Levy unionized as Local 66 of the Designing Engineers, AFL-CIO. As Zeitlin recalls, the union drive was not so much in opposition to Jessor as to his personal secretary, whose aloof style and treatment of black employees rankled a number of staff members. The union issues included higher wages for lower-paid workers and benefits such as severance and vacation pay (Zeitlin 1994). The strike hurt Jessor, although according to organizers it was aimed not at him but at the UHF, where, the staff felt, the office management policies originated. Jessor's office varied in size according to the work load from UHF, reaching a peak of 30 employees on the Co-op City job.

Former employees remember Jessor as being kind, tough, demanding, and meticulous in dress, manner, and supervision. By all accounts he was very intense, treating his housing work as a calling. He spent most of his time in the office involved in written and telephone correspondence, and in the field running a close watch on building contractors. His files reveal voluminous correspondence with all manner of city agencies including the City Planning Commission and Robert Moses as Construction Coordinator. All correspondence was copied to Kazan, whom Jessor always addressed as "Mister Kazan," and with whom he discussed even the most mundane technical detail. Jessor was constantly looking for cost saving construction systems or materials, calculating for each the impact on rents per room per month.

Jessor spent his entire career working for a single client, the UHF, with two exceptions: the second building at the Co-ops, and two towers for the Union of Electrical Workers in Electchester, their residential community in Queens, built in 1966. When increasing development costs drove the UHF out of the housing business in the mid-1970s, Jessor's office had little work. Efforts to generate new commissions in Long Island and Florida do not appear to have been pursued with vigor. Unlike Springsteen, who groomed Jessor to take over the firm, Jessor did not prepare for the succession of his office, a disappointment especially for Graupe, who worked with him as a principal designer from 1947 until the firm's closing in 1979.

Ironically, the man whose entire career was devoted to designing family apartments remained a bachelor until he was 85, living most of this time in residence hotels. Without family responsibilities, Jessor was tireless in advocating for the cause of affordable housing for the working man. He was very active in the New York Society of Architects, a professional organization founded in 1905 as an alternative to the American Institute of Architects by Jewish and Catholic architects put off by the "clubby" attitude of the early AIA. The NYSA represents the anonymous firms who are responsible for

the bulk of construction in New York City, as distinct from the higher profile AIA firms eager for national and international recognition. Jessor joined the NYSA in 1955, served on many committees, and was President from 1968-1970. He received the Society's Distinguished Service Award in 1975 and their Sidney L. Strauss Award for "outstanding achievement" in 1978, joining a distinguished list of previous recipients including Charles Abrams, Ada Louise Huxtable, and Robert Moses.

Jessor was defensive about his work and thin-skinned about even the slightest criticism, which was particularly severe over Co-op City. In 1970, Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi published an article in *Progressive Architecture* defending Co-op City as a reasonable response to the need for affordable housing given cost constraints (Scott Brown and Venturi, 1970). Despite the "best face" that they put on the project, Jessor took issue with them on several points in an addendum to their article. His comments, reflecting views shared with Kazan and others at the UHF, constitute a virtual credo:

*The "social fabric" so dear to the hearts of Jane Jacobs and her ilk does not exist. The people living in the miserable slums are not there by choice ... The people have no "grass roots" in these foul rookeries. They live there because it is the cheapest place they can find, horrible as it is.*

*The only solution is large scale urban renewal — the "Bulldozer Approach." United Housing Foundation has been very successful with this approach. ... All of the families residing in the area prior to demolition of these old rookeries were relocated to habitations superior to the ones they had formerly occupied...*

*High-rise buildings were chosen because up to a certain height there is economy in their construction. Also, with a limited area, the taller the buildings, the greater the open spaces for a required number of housing units. Since it is impossible in a city such as New York to give each family a little house with a garden all round it, the best thing to do is to provide as much open space as possible for the occupants of city buildings.*

*...The final solution to housing for the masses is that it be a government function such as streets, highways, sewers, water, subways, post office, Ozarks, etc. It is too vital for the needs of the people to be subject to the profit motive (Jessor, 1968).*

## CO-OP CITY

Constructed from 1965 to 1973 on marshy land and sand fill in the east Bronx, Co-op City is the nation's largest cooperative housing project, accommodating nearly 60,000 people in 15,382 apartments in 35 towers and seven three-story townhouse clusters. The townhouses, designed by Graupe, were a concession by Jessor to the New York City Planning Commission, which was concerned about the project's monolithic feel. Jessor also added a linear slab type to his standard cross-shaped buildings. The landscape firm of Zion and Breen was brought in to handle the vast green areas left open by the

high rise towers that covered only 20 percent of the site area and the construction of eight garages with space for over 10,000 cars, the largest structured parking facilities in the country at the time.

Even during construction Co-op City came under attack. Architectural critic Ada Louise Huxtable criticized its “sterile site-panning and uninspired architectural design” (Carter, 1971). While “[i]ts size and scale are monumental,” she wrote, “its environmental and social planning are minimal,” comparing the conventional shopping centers at Co-op City unfavorably with the “attractive town centers” that distinguished the contemporary Swedish new towns of Vallingby and Farsta. Other critics were equally condemning of the project. Walter McQuade found the architecture, “sterile and blunt,” while Peter Blake called the buildings “fairly hideous” (Carter, 1971). The project was also criticized on social grounds, charged with luring the middle class out of central Bronx neighborhoods like Highbridge, University Heights, and the Grand Concourse. However, most housing experts agreed that Co-op City merely heightened awareness of the deeper problem of white, middle-class flight from the city (Roberts, 1969).

But Co-op City had problems far more grave than the displeasure of architecture critics over its site planning and exterior appearance. While the buildings are set on over 50,000 pilings down to bedrock, the underground utility distribution network has been vulnerable to movement and settling in the swampy soil, as have stairs and ramps at the entrances to the buildings. As late as 1990 Co-op city residents were still petitioning Governor Cuomo to make good on his pledge to make the necessary repairs, running a full page advertisement in the *New York Times* to dramatize their plight (Co-op City residents, 1990).

The project suffered financial problems as well, and these were far more significant for the fate of the UHF, marking a watershed in the historic relation between wages and housing costs in New York City. By mid-1971, as the project neared completion, construction costs had risen to \$22,500 per unit from the original estimate of \$18,000. The UHF needed to refinance their mortgage to bring in an additional \$60-million, but interest rates had risen from 4 percent to 6-1/2 percent, fueled by inflation during the period of the Vietnam War. The price of oil was up from five cents to 31 cents a gallon. When the combined additional charges were added up, it produced a monthly carrying charge of \$40 per room. Jessor himself prepared the cost estimates, carefully working out in long-hand on a lined yellow pad the impact of each additional cost factor.

While this was still a bargain rent, it was almost double the initial rent of \$23.01 in 1969. Here, the officers of Riverbay Corporation, the management company set up by UHF to operate Co-op City, made a fatal error. Instead of working with the tenants to negotiate a settlement with the state, they tried to pass along the entire increase to the residents, announcing a 25 percent increase in carrying charges in May 1975. Management’s aloof demeanor established an “us versus them” mood, a sad turn of events in a complex built by organized labor for union workers. The strategy backfired

completely. Led by Charles Rosen, a union printer, the tenants organized the longest and largest rent strike in U.S. history. The tenants maintained a high degree of solidarity for over 13 months, organizing to take care of buildings and grounds, and meeting weekly in the Co-op City High School, where strike leader Rosen enthralled his polyglot audience in English, Spanish, and Yiddish. Tenant groups from around the city mobilized in support of the residents. Eventually the state was forced to concede, promising to implement only modest rent hikes and to find other remedies to reduce the burden of carrying costs for the tenants.

In spite of these early problems, Co-op City developed into a successful community. Even Ada Louise Huxtable was forced to acknowledge that “They build good apartments at unbeatable prices” (Huxtable, 1968). As UHF Vice President George Schechter explained, “It’s oriented inward, toward the interior, where people live” (Carter, 1971). It is still considered by many an attractive living environment, since, as one reporter notes, “what vexes architects means less to many residents than cost, good schools, safety, and racial harmony” (Selvin, 1991). It has achieved a measure of racial integration unusual in New York with a population composition of 50 percent white, 30 percent black, and 20 percent Hispanic according to the 1990 census (Newman, 1992). There has been a recent influx of Jewish families from the former Soviet Union, aided by interest-free mortgages from the Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty. Co-op City appeals to immigrant families seeking a more diverse living environment than the heavily Russian enclave in Brighton Beach. The tower-in-the-park setting also appeals to many of these families, providing welcome open space. As one new resident exclaimed, talking about her move to Co-op City from Washington Heights, “I felt a lack of fresh air, a lack of green trees. And all of these things I found in Co-op City (Fern, 1993).

The experience at Co-op City thoroughly demoralized the UHF leadership, who blamed the strike on “that Maoist” Charlie Rosen. Harold Ostroff, former Executive Vice President of UHF, resigned on April 10, 1976, saying, “What took a half century to create and establish has been smashed and set back twenty-five years ... by the irresponsible action of a relatively few people at Co-op City and by the apathy of the vast majority of members of that cooperative” (Minutes, 1976).

But in reality it was not the strike but the disequilibrium between worker wages and housing costs that drove the UHF out of the housing business. The 1971 Annual Report describes efforts to reduce the construction costs of the Twin Pines project then in the planning stages. To make the housing affordable to their constituency, UHF needed a combination of a low-interest mortgage, tax abatement, and the introduction of prefabricated construction systems to reduce labor costs. At the last moment, the State of New York balked at committing a large mortgage to untested construction technologies, even though officials of the Building and Construction Trades Council had signed an umbrella contract covering all the trades. Sadly, the UHF concluded that they were “not organized to sponsor housing which

average working people cannot afford" (United Housing Foundation 1971). With some bitterness they lamented, "Unfortunately, real commitment does not exist even in a city, state and nation where there is a desperate housing situation." Although the UHF vowed to continue with other cooperative efforts in areas like insurance, education, and building management, they announced the impending sale of Twin Pines to a private developer (National Kinney Corp. and the Starrett Housing Corp.), and bowed out of the housing development business.

## CONCLUSION

The sale of Twin Pines to Kinney/Starrett marked the end of a remarkable 50 year run during which the labor movement, led by the ACW and the UHF, was the foremost developer of middle income housing in the City of New York. They consistently took advantage of every new government program offered to facilitate affordable housing production, forming the first Limited Profit Housing Companies under the New York State Housing Law of 1926, the first Title I urban renewal project, and the first Mitchell-Lama project. Co-op City alone accounted for nearly a third of the total 155,000 units built under Mitchell-Lama financing. Although the UHF remains involved in cooperative housing to this day as a partner in a rehabilitation program known as CATCH (Community Assisted Tenant Controlled Housing), this program is but a pale shadow of the earlier effort. Gone is the institutional framework of the UHF, with its array of cooperative programs, and gone, also, is the underlying strength of the unionized workplace, which gave many of the early residents their experience with collective effort. The current thrust in affordable housing in New York City is privately owned single-family and two-family row houses, with substantial subsidies from city and state subsidizing fee simple home ownership.

The withdrawal of the UHF is a serious loss for middle income housing in New York, because their production was not only substantial in numbers but of solid quality. The high-rise "tower in the park" buildings that are often blamed for social problems associated with public housing are seen here as providing a substantial level of amenity. The evident success of these units as habitation, notwithstanding their shortcomings as architecture or urban design, directly challenges current thinking about public housing which presumes that by replacing high rise units with low rise townhouses the social pathology of desperate poverty will be wiped away. As Scott Brown and Venturi aptly observed in 1970, "There exists no body of evidence linking social pathology with bleak or beautiful architecture and some evidence that people carry their social patterns, as well as their social ills, with

them from housing type to housing type." (Scott Brown and Venturi 1970 p. 66)

There is ample evidence, on the other hand, of high levels of social cohesion and resident satisfaction in the UHF projects, the Co-op City strike being only the largest and most dramatic. Turnover at two of the larger projects — Warbasse Houses on Coney Island and Penn South in Manhattan — is so slow that both have become "norc's" (naturally occurring retirement communities). At Warbasse, 40 percent of the households have at least one member over 65 (Oser 1996) and at Penn South the percentage appears even higher (DeKadt 1997). Residents stay for the value, for the community, and because the apartments are well designed, a measure of Jessor's success in his primary objective. Both Warbasse and Penn South have resisted the temptation to "go private" by phasing in full real estate taxes and placing their units on the open market, where apartments bought for \$10,000 can now fetch upward of \$100,000. This potential windfall was opened up by the expiration of the initial 25 year resale restrictions that came with the city real estate tax abatement. The votes at Warbasse and Penn South reflect the residents' desire to remain in their communities, preserving their housing as middle income resources in the process.

At other UHF developments, however, notably the projects along Grand Street in the Lower East Side known as Coop Village (Seward Park, Hillman Houses, East River Houses), a pitched battle has divided residents into camps for and against privatization. Even some advocates of the cooperative movement have been swayed by the financial bonanza represented by bringing their co-ops into the /private market. One long time resident explained, "Cooperativism is a very good thing. However, people are people. Where they see an opportunity for making money, they're certainly going to want to do that, moral ground being one thing, and making profit another. This is the United States of America, you know." (Greenhouse 1996)

The decision to place limited equity coops on the open market represents an abandonment of the cooperative ideal in the face of the pressures of a market economy. It signals a fundamental shift in the social consciousness of the working class from producer to consumer. While the choice to realize the value of a personal asset is certainly a rational one, individual gain comes at the expense of an important collective benefit. The predominance of market ideology over class solidarity has always been a hallmark of American capitalism, but its emergence in the heart of one of the labor movement's brightest successes signals a profound shift in social ideals.

**APPENDIX****Housing by Herman Jessor**

With Springsteen and Goldhammer:		Units
1927	Amalgamated Cooperative Apts.	620
1927	Workers Cooperative Colony (Coops)	339
1930	Amalgamated Dwellings	236
	Total:	1,195
With George W. Springsteen:		
1947-49	Amalgamated Coop Apts.	815
1951	Hillman Houses	807
1955	Mutual Housing Association	123
1956	East River Housing Corp.	1,672
	Total:	3,417
As Herman J. Jessor Architect:		
1929	Workers Cooperative Colony ( Coops)	385
1958	Park Reservoir Housing Corporation	273
1961	Seward Park Housing Corp.	1,728
1963	Mutual Redevelopment Houses, Inc.	2,820
1965	Amalgamated Warbasse Houses, Inc.	2,585
1966	Rochdale Village, Inc.	5,860
1966	Electchester Twin Towers	184
1969	Amalgamated Towers	316
1973	Co-op City (Riverbay Corp)	15,372
1974	Twin Pines Village, Inc.	5,881
	Total:	35,404
GRAND TOTAL:		40,016

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## INTERVIEWS

Herman Jessor - May 18, May 23, Aug. 15, Aug. 18, 1989

### Former Jessor Employees:

Isaiah Ehrlich	Aug. 8, 1989
Frank Emma	July 28, 1989
Gerhard Graupe	Aug. 28, 1989
Stanley Isaacs	Aug. 9, 1989
Harold Levy	Aug. 8, 1989
Morris Zeitlin	Mar. 17, 1994

### Others:

Andrew Antoniadis	Mar. 16, 1994
Greg Cohen	Mar. 8, 1994
John Lebduska	Mar. 10, 1994
Harold Ostroff	Mar. 13, 1994, Mar. 17, 1994
David Smith	Feb. 26, 1994
David Todd	Aug. 23, 1989
Ken Wray	Mar. 18, 1994