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P.87(33).

CABINET.

HOUSING ACT, 1930: PART I.

Note by Minister of Health, covering draft
Circular to local authorities.

I circulate for the information of my colleagues a draft of a circular on the clearance of slums and the improvement of bad housing conditions which I propose shortly to issue to Local Authorities.

(Intld.) E.H.Y.

March 31st, 1933.

Circular 1331

Housing Authorities(England and Wales)

MINISTRY OF HEALTH,
Whitehall, S.W.1.

April, 1933.

Sir,

HOUSING ACT, 1930: PART I.

1. I am directed by the Minister of Health to state that His Majesty's Government have given very careful consideration to a matter that deeply and urgently concerns social welfare, the clearance of slums and the improvement of bad housing conditions.

2. In the view of His Majesty's Government the present rate at which the slums are being dealt with is too slow and they look for a concerted effort between the central government and the local authorities immediately concerned to ensure a speedier end to the evil, and an end within a limited time. His Majesty's Government are further of opinion that present conditions are favourable to the success of a vigorous campaign of slum clearance. I am, therefore, to request that your Council will take this letter into their immediate consideration and will regard the matter as one which requires urgent attention.

3. The slum is, in the main, a relic of the time when general law and byelaws did not prevent the establishment of housing conditions which are intolerable according to present standards. It is a strictly limited problem; and it is measurable both as to the cost and the time required for its solution. Experience has shown that reliance for a solution cannot be placed upon indirect influences such as a "filtering up" into new accommodation.

4. **Programme and time table.**—In the opinion of the Minister, to make sure that the evil shall be remedied, it is necessary to concentrate upon direct action, to fix a limited time for the work, and to prepare a time-table for its progress and completion within the time limited. The time-table must, of course, be based upon a complete appreciation of the whole extent of the problem in the area concerned.

5. For over twenty years, the Local Authority have had the duty of inspecting and recording the condition of all working class property in their area. The records kept in accordance with this

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duty* should now provide a complete picture of the conditions of the Borough or District. The Local Authority should, therefore, be able to take immediate action.

6. I am, accordingly, to request that they will now proceed :

(a) to prepare and adopt a programme, the components of which should be—

(1) a list of the areas in which clearance is necessary, with information of the number of houses to be demolished in each, and of the number of their inhabitants ;

(2) a list of the areas in which improvement by way of reconditioning or otherwise is necessary, with information as in (1) above ;

(3) a time-table for the initiation, progress and completion of action to secure clearance or improvement, as the case may be, of all these areas ; and

(4) a time-table of rehousing co-ordinated with the displacements contemplated by the time-table of clearance operations :

(b) to make an immediate beginning with the programme by the declaration forthwith as clearance or improvement areas of such areas as can be immediately dealt with, and by making the necessary orders.

If in any case the records available to the Local Authority are insufficient for the purpose of framing such a programme, I am to request that the necessary survey and inspections may be put in hand forthwith.

7. The Minister will be glad to receive, not later in any event than September 30th next, a copy of the programme adopted by the Local Authority. He hopes that many programmes may be available substantially sooner. The programmes should, so far as practicable, be drawn on the basis of clearing all areas that require clearance not later than 1938.

8. The Minister desires me to emphasise the point that while slum clearance work on a large scale may be necessary only in a limited number of large towns, there are few towns or even villages in which, although the areas concerned may not extend to more than half a dozen houses, there is not an urgent need for some action under the Act of 1930.

9. London.—The problem of the slum in the County of London stands by itself. The area and the population of the County are

* In particular, records under the Housing Consolidated Regulations, 1925, as amended by the Housing Consolidated Amendment Regulations, 1932.

large in comparison with those in any other urban aggregation; and the effort required by the Metropolitan Borough Councils and the London County Council will be greater, and the time needed to remedy the present deficiencies will be longer, in proportion.

The Metropolitan Borough Councils should confer with and submit their proposals to the London County Council, whose duty it will be to co-ordinate such proposals and transmit them to the Minister as part of a general programme which they will themselves prepare for the County of London.

10. **Rate of Subsidy.**—The present rate of Exchequer subsidy* under the Housing Act, 1930, has been maintained at its present level as an inducement to local authorities to undertake without delay the greatest possible amount of slum clearance and improvement work.

11. **Re-housing.**—As an accelerated rate of progress in clearance work is imperative, I am to state that the Minister will in future be prepared as a general rule to entertain applications, forwarded to him at the same time as the Council's resolution declaring a clearance area, for loan sanctions in respect of a reasonable proportion of the re-housing likely to be required. The Minister hopes that, by this means, it will be possible to shorten considerably the aggregate time taken over the whole process of dealing with bad housing areas.

12. **Advice and Assistance.**—The provisions of the Act of 1930 have been fully explained in Circular 1138. Should the Local Authority find any difficulty, technically or otherwise, in action under the Act or in the preparation of the programmes proposed, the Minister will place the services of his staff (which is being augmented to meet the need for wider and more rapid action) at their disposal.

13. **Financial Considerations.**—Conditions are now exceptionally favourable for the work. With low building costs and cheap money, houses built with the subsidy payable under the Housing Act, 1930, can be let at rents well within the capacity of the poorest of the working classes. That subsidy is equivalent to £15 per annum for each non-parlour house with three bedrooms, since such a house is regarded as providing accommodation for five persons. The average inclusive rents payable would therefore compare very favourably with the average rent paid by tenants of slum houses. Higher unit grants than that described above are available in respect of houses built in agricultural parishes or flats in buildings of more than three storeys on expensive sites.

* £2 5s. 0d. per person displaced annually plus an annual contribution from local rates of £3 15s. 0d. per house both payable for forty years.

14. In so far as the families displaced from the demolished slums are in possession of sufficient means to find other accommodation, the new houses at these low rents will be available for other poor persons who are living in seriously unsatisfactory conditions and who cannot afford ordinary rents.

A copy of this Circular is being sent to the Medical Officer of Health and further copies may be obtained from His Majesty's Stationery Office, at the addresses shewn below.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Secretary.

The Clerk

to the Authority.

LONDON

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1933

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Printed under the authority of His Majesty's Stationery Office
 By Wymans London Printing Co., Ltd., 93, Long Acre, W.C.2.

5699. Wt. 127/2076. 12 & 80. 3/33. Wy.L.P.Co., Ltd, Gp. 2.