# Foreword

The Housing Association Movement is surely one of the most lively and constructive social forces in Britain in recent years and Journals 52, 53 and 59 explored one section of it, Co-operative housing. It is timely to revisit it and to examine the implications for the Movement of the government's Bill on Housing. This now "drags its slow length" through its second reading in the Commons and is expected to be enacted in August of this year.

By far the largest part of the Housing Association Movement comprises the housing associations - non-profit making voluntary bodies which provide houses for rent particularly addressed to the benefit of groups in need. A relatively small part of the Movement comprises housing Co-operatives which have corporate ownership of houses for rent to their members: distinct from these, of course, are the management Co-operatives where tenants exercise some or all of the management of council housing. Both the associations and the housing Co-operatives depend on grants for their provisions from Government sources to enable them to balance their books.

## Recent Progress of Housing Associations

It is a measure of recent progress that according to the 1985 survey by the National Federation of Housing Associations the Movement had since the 1970's doubled its provision of homes in England and Wales to over 550,000, accommodating over one million people in rented accommodation. Co-operatives provided about 10,000 of these homes.

Of the total stock about 31% were provided for the elderly; 16% for other adult households; 13% for one-parent families; 13% for other families; and 27% for single adults. About 70% of the national investment in housing association work goes to the country's "urban stress areas".

## The Present Bill

The present Bill follows the White Paper of September 1987 (Cm 214) and the Minister's summary and claims for it are given in the following extracts from a Department of the Environment News Release of 20 November 1987.

"First our proposals will revitalise the private rented sector. For too long the market has been choked by too many controls. What is needed is homes in the right place at the right price. If tenants are to get the choice they deserve, landlords must be guaranteed a reasonable return on their investment. Our proposals aim to satisfy both demands."

*Charging Market Rents on New Lettings*

"The legislation would allow landlords to charge market rents on all new lettings. This is the key which will help unlock the doors of over half a million empty private properties in this country, to the benefit of tenants. But the Bill offers safeguards to tenant and landlord: tenants will have security of tenure under the new assured tenancies, while landlords are guaranteed recovery of their property under shorthold lettings. Housing benefit will continue to help those on low incomes and existing tenants will generally be unaffected."

*Attracting Private Finance for Housing Associations*

"I have been impressed by the standard of rented housing provided by the Housing Association movement for those on lower incomes. This Bill would allow us to build on that expertise by encouraging them to develop further partnerships with banks and building societies. By attracting private finance, topped up with grants, the associations will be able to provide more housing for low income groups for a given amount of public money."

*Right of Tenants to Change Landlord*

"The Bill also provides the opportunity to open up to competition the closed world of the council estate and provide more options for the tenants, many of whom rent from the local authority through necessity rather than choice. Those tenants would be given a new right to change their landlord where they are not satisfied with the service they are getting from their local authority. Competition of this kind can only bring benefits to tenants, whether they transfer or stay."

*Role for Housing Action Trusts*

"But there is some local authority housing where the problems have become so intractable that new and radical methods must be found to tackle them. This Bill provides for the creation of Housing Action Trusts to take over some of the worst council housing, renovate it and pass it on to new forms of ownership and management. This single-minded approach offers new hope to these areas and a better deal for those who live there.

This Government wants to see more and better housing for rent. The Housing Bill creates the opportunity for putting private and public finance to work to create more choice and more competition: these are the keys to success."

## Implications for Housing Association Movement

Our interest for this Journal was focused on the implication of these proposals for the Housing Association Movement and we are grateful to the contributors who offer some analyses and speculations from their different perspectives. Harold Campbell affirms his credo on housing Co-operatives and also offers out of his unique experience a general retrospect and prospect. Dr. Birchall analyses the general assumptions and objectives of the Government Bill and their implications for the housing Co-operatives, and this latter aspect is also examined by Sally Thomas of the Housing Corporation. Keith Brading and Derek Mason look particularly at the impact the Bill could have for the housing associations.

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