

Honolulu Advertiser June 5, 1964

letters

Land, aquaculture, etc.

Court decision & housing

The U.S. Supreme Court decision upholding the constitutionality of the state's Land Reform Act (Act 307) went to the heart of the matter — the Legislature's right to "reduce the perceived social and economic evils of a land oligopoly" which interferes with the normal functioning of the land market and makes it impossible for large numbers of people to buy lots at fair prices.

The time would seem ripe to apply the benefits of this doctrine not only to those fortunate families who already own homes, but for the many thousands of island families who have not been able to find "affordable" housing.

The unavailability on the market of vacant land on which homes selling for from \$60,000 to \$90,000 could be built is the greatest single factor in the present housing shortage. The land is there, but, as an official of the Bishop Estate said last year, "The Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate is not in the business of land development . . . We are a landed trust and we are going to keep the bulk of the trust in real property."

The courts have long upheld the right of public agencies to use their powers of eminent domain to acquire land for housing. Act 307 should now be broadened, by legislative action if necessary, to permit purchase of tracts of suitably located and zoned vacant land — by negotiation if possible, otherwise by condemnation.

The land so acquired should then be sold or leased to housing cooperatives, self-help groups, limited profit housing corporations, small private builders, or others undertaking to build reasonably priced housing for island families.

Thus the benefits of this landmark court decision could be enjoyed not only by 6,000 current lessees but potentially by tens of thousands of other families priced out of the housing market by the "land oligopoly."

DONALD MONSON