

A Book Review:

***THE RIGHT TO HOUSING: A BLUEPRINT FOR HOUSING THE NATION***  
by Dick Cluster. Washington, DC: Institute for Policy Studies, 1989,  
68 pages.

Marjorie Inman

The Right to Housing: A Blueprint for Housing the Nation is a much-needed update to A Decent Home, published in 1968 by the President's Committee on Urban Housing. This book further reinforces a plea by the 81st Congress (1949) to achieve the nationwide goal of a decent home for every American family.

Current economic conditions have left an alarming number of persons homeless. Cluster believes that the primary cause of this dislocation has been the gradual but increasing imbalance between income and housing costs.

The author states that there is a single, underlying theme that explains our society's current inability to make adequate, affordable housing available to all segments of the population. Housing is not treated as a necessity of life to be provided at the highest quality and quantity at the lowest cost. It is treated as a product or commodity intended to provide the highest possible profit for those who develop, finance, buy, sell, and manage it.

The Progressive Housing Program for America, outlined within the book, begins with the assumption that adequate shelter should be available to every American household at an affordable cost. Various examples that accomplish the goal of "decent housing for every person" are cited, including specific cases that have been successfully implemented in recent years. Also included are suggestions for safeguarding government assisted housing.

"The 'housing climate' is right for a radical change," states Cluster. He sees clear evidence that Congress is seriously concerned about the nation's housing affordability crisis. Cluster presents ideas and possible solutions that are, according to the Chair of the U.S. Subcommittee on Housing and Community Development, "imaginative, seminal, and creative". The Right to Housing is available through Community Economics, Inc., 1904 Franklin Street #900, Oakland, CA 94612.

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