

ANTI-POVERTY, CRIME AND FIREARMS LEGISLATION - 1967

It is obvious that poverty and crime are not interchangeable terms: the underprivileged are often law abiding, while the affluent may flout the law. But it is equally demonstrable that the deprivations, resentments, humiliations—and often actual physical need caused by poverty may constitute major causes of and incitements to criminal actions. But quite apart from any connections between poverty and crime, the Jewish heritage stresses the right of human beings to live in dignity.

The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges its affiliates to work with their appropriate government and private agencies to effect any necessary reforms in the following areas:

1. More and Better Low-Cost Housing—Overcrowded, filthy, disease ridden slums filled with rotting tenement buildings are prime breeding grounds of crime and social and physical infection. Urban blight may be combated by comprehensive planning which includes parks and services, recreational and cultural facilities, as well as new and/or remodeled housing. Where government subsidies are inadequate or are not forthcoming, the help of private enterprise may often be obtained, especially when long-term gains are shown to compare favorably with short-term expenditures.

In the name of its United States affiliates, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges its members to become familiar with the Model Cities program and other makers of housing and urban development. NFTS has long committed itself to open occupancy so that no man or woman may be deprived because of race, religion or national origin, of his fundamental right to live wherever his income permits.

2. Rat Control—Flourishing and multiplying not only in the filth of city slums throughout the world but also in other localities, rats harass and threaten slum inhabitants and the underprivileged generally, carry disease from country to country and contaminate vast stores of grain and foodstuffs at a time when many areas of the world are threatened with starvation. Rat eradication programs would do much to raise the level of sanitation and health throughout the world. In the name of the United States affiliates, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges the Congress of the United States to give priority status and swift passage to rat-control legislation to be followed by prompt implementation. NFTS further urges its affiliates in other countries to take similar cognizance, in ways appropriate to them, of this worldwide problem.

3. Anti-Poverty Legislation—The National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, in the name of its United States affiliates, again urges these affiliates to communicate to their Congressmen their desire for full, continuing support and implementation of strong anti-poverty legislation. Such legislation should authorize funds to carry on the present anti-poverty programs: for example, the Job Corps, work and training for youth and adults, the Community Action programs, Head Start, volunteer projects involving VISTA, aid to the rural and urban poor, small business assistance, and a new program of day care for children of low-income families as well as emergency employment measures, which will place the unemployed, unskilled poor of the cities and rural areas to work at once on an immense backlog of projects needed to be done in the public service.

4. Restrictions on the Sale of Firearms—Control over the sale of all firearms is necessary to prevent lethal weapons from coming into the possession of irresponsible criminal individuals. Mail-order firearms purchase and interstate transportation of firearms should be controlled, and local registration of such weapons required and enforced. These necessary steps must be taken in a manner which establishes effective control and registration at all levels of government, with a minimum of inconvenience to sportsmen and other responsible citizens.

In the name of its United States affiliates, the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods urges its members to write their National, State and local legislators asking that top priority be given to legislation to control and register all firearms.