

A N R I C S I N I T I A T I V E

T H E B I R T H O F W P H T

An account of the founding of The World of Property Housing Trust (now Sanctuary Housing Association, a component of the Spiral Sanctuary Group).

C o m p i l e d b y V E N T E R N I C H O L L

PREFACE

The World of Property Housing Trust (commonly known as WPHT) was founded by Francis Bennion in 1969. As the following account shows, it owed much of its early success to warm support from Chartered Surveyors. The story of its founding is therefore part of RICS history, but seems to be unknown or forgotten. In particular its original function as a fundraising charity aiming to be the vehicle for a return by the property-world for their financial successes has become overlooked. Hence the need for this brief account.

I have known Bennion since serving in his Wellington bomber crew during World War II, and followed the early days of WPHT with fascination. It was conjured out of literally nothing, since Bennion had to raise every penny of the pruning finance himself. It is time to tell the story of how this was done.

Although Bennion is better known in RICS circles for having engineered the merger of the Institution with the Chartered Auctioneers and Estate Agents' Institute, and having set up the abortive Estate Agents Council, the founding of WPHT was also an important achievement. Moreover it was a lasting one, unlike the Estate Agents Council. At the time of its 1989 merger with Spiral, WPHT (or Sanctuary Housing Association as it had been renamed) owned housing valued at well over £150m.

The story of the failure of the Estate Agents Council, following repeated attempts by the profession to set up a statutory registration system, has been told at length by Bennion in the pages of The Estates Gazette (see the 1968 volume, pages 427, 543, 661, 779 and 887). If the Estate Agents Council had been allowed to succeed, much subsequent grief would have been avoided. But that is a different area of the property world's history. Our present purpose is with WPHT.

V.N.

AN RICS INITIATIVE: THE BIRTH OF WPHT

An account of the founding of The World of Property Housing Trust (now Sanctuary Housing Association, a component of the Spiral Sanctuary Group).

On a sunny afternoon in August 1968 Francis Bennion, barrister, author, and late Secretary of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, sat in his office at 16 Lincoln's Inn Fields with a blank sheet of paper and a puzzled frown. He had decided it would be a good idea to set up a charitable housing trust supported by the property world, many of whose members he had come to know during his term of office at the RICS. There was no money in hand for this, so it was necessary to raise some. Whose help could he enlist? Bennion began to write down names.

That was the beginning of the World of Property Housing Trust (later Sanctuary Housing Association). It sprang from a suggestion which had been made a few days earlier by the late C Jackson-Cole, a charitably-minded business man who was a founder of Oxfam and Help the Aged. Hearing that Bennion had resigned as Secretary of the RICS, Jackson-Cole (through the medium of Raymond Andrews of the estate agents Andrews and Partners) had recruited him as a part-time consultant to his charitable organisation Voluntary and Christian Service and given him exclusive use of the Lincoln's Inn Office. Jackson-Cole, who was very keen on fund raising, suggested to Bennion that in view of his RICS connections he might raise for charitable purposes the sum of £25,000 from estate agents. Bennion thought about this, then had a better idea. He proposed that he should embark on the much more ambitious project of founding a new housing charity representing some return by the property world for the wealth it had amassed from the public. It seemed to Bennion that the time was ripe for a big leap forward in the housing association movement. He surmised, correctly as it turned out, that the public who wished to rent was growing tired of having nothing to choose from but council housing and private landlords.

Jackson-Cole agreed, but insisted that the new body would have to find every penny of its finance for itself. Bennion accepted that this must be so, and welcomed the challenge.

The first name Bennion thought of was that of Sir Milner Holland, identified with housing problems in London through the publication of the famous Milner Holland report. The next was Sir Henry Wells, former President of the RICS, who had become a close friend when Bennion and he worked together at the Institution. The full list of founder members of the new housing trust in alphabetical order was-

Francis Bennion (Chairman)

S G H Davis

Sir Milner Holland KCVO CBE QC

J P Macey FRICS FIHM

T S Stallabrass

Lewis E Waddilove OBE

G D Walford FRICS FIARb

Sir Henry Wells CBE FRICS.

John Hincks of Manchester, President of the Chartered Auctioneers and Estate Agents' Institute, was among the early founders but died before the Trust was constituted.

A suitable name had to be found for the Trust. Bennion's first idea was The Estate Profession Housing Trust. Then his notions became more ambitious, with a wish to embrace the entire property world. As he was to write in an article on WPHT published in the Winter 1969 issue of The Estate Agent-

"Who is better fitted to solve the financial problems of providing rented housing at realistic rents than the shrewd and experienced developer? Who better than the architect or building surveyor in private practice for rehabilitating older houses with some useful life left? Who can improve on the experienced house-builder in conceiving and executing a satisfactory housing development? Who better than the estate agent to find sites or houses suitable for conversion?"

So Bennion changed the name to The Property World Housing Trust. When tried out this was found to cause confusion however. Some thought that what was being set up was a "world housing trust", which was not the case. So Bennion finally settled on the name by which the Trust was known in its formative years, The World of Property Housing Trust (or WPHT for short). Even this did not avoid all error. On one occasion an invoice was received addressed to "the Underworld Housing Property Trust"

An architect associated with the new Trust, David Dry, designed a logo in which the letters wpht were set out in lower case. The high upright of the h had a sloped top, the line of which continued downwards through the top and cross-piece of the t to create the effect of a house roof. The result is shown on the cover of this pamphlet.

The Trust was inaugurated as a housing association within the meaning of the Housing Act 1957 on 5 May 1969, Bennion being issued with Certificate No 1. He had drawn up its constitution, and now procured its registration as a charity with the Charity Commission. It was given the Registration Number 259013. Such registration was indispensable before fund raising could start. This was needed immediately because the nascent Trust had literally no money at all to begin its work. Without initial donations it could employ no staff. Neither could it take office space of its own. Yet without a staff and offices it was difficult to raise money. It was a classic chicken and egg situation. Moreover fund raising would be difficult unless the Trust were seen to be active in house-building. Yet it could scarcely become active without employing staff and taking office premises.

Bennion saw the key as being the speedy recruitment of a highly-motivated and competent General Manager, who would be prepared to take the risk of staking his career on the success of efforts he himself would largely need to make, at least initially. Enough funds were raised to employ Management Selection Limited to find candidates for this position. Expensive advertising was engaged in, and a short list of applicants drawn up.

The Trust began with a Council consisting of the eight founder members listed above. George Walford soon resigned, being replaced by Sir Hugh Wilson, President of the RIBA, and two Chartered Surveyors: G Roy Symmons and Michael Fenton-Jones. The Council made its selection from among the applicants for General Manager. The choice was Derek Lancaster-Gaye, who was at the time on the staff of the Spastics Society. Bennion spent much time and trouble briefing Lancaster-Gaye and making sure he was fully aware of the needs and risks of the job. Possibly Bennion was too successful in familiarising Lancaster-Gaye

with the hazardous nature of his task for at the very last minute, when publicity had been given to his appointment, Lancaster-Gaye suddenly withdrew his acceptance of the post. The Council then turned to another of the applicants, Alan Bailey. On 1 August 1969 Bailey, already well known to Bennion as a former RICS Under Secretary promoted to that position by Bennion himself, was appointed General Manager and Secretary of the Trust. The other early staff members were Caroline Fitzwilhams, Sara Turnbull and J D Hall. On 1 February 1970 two development surveyors, H L Evans and J Dillon-Guy, were added. The early success of the Trust owed a very great deal to the enthusiasm and energy of this small staff. Alan Bailey in particular was a tower of strength. He showed great ingenuity and flair. Like Bennion himself, he was able to draw on many contacts with the property world made during his staff time at the RICS. He also had a marked ability in public relations and publicity.

As its first Vice-Presidents the Trust appointed Lord Holford, Lord Llewellyn Davies, the Duke of St Albans, Sir Robert Matthew, Sir Keith Joseph and Sir Cyril Black. The post of President was reserved for one who did much to help the Trust on its way, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. When Bennion later asked the Duke to accept the post he declined on the ground that he could not be seen to show favouritism to one particular housing charity.

Outside professional assistance was secured by the appointment as solicitors to the Trust of Messrs Trower Still & Keeling (now Trowers & Hamlens), and as auditors Cooper Brothers (now Coopers & Lybrand Deloittes). The former appointment arose because J E Robins, a friend of Bennion's from their days together as Oxford undergraduates, was a partner in the firm. Cooper Brothers were appointed because one of their partners, David Hobson, had assisted Bennion in the founding of the Statute Law Society.

At first the Trust was housed on a temporary basis at 16 Lincoln's Inn Fields. Then on 1 December 1969 it moved into its own offices at 34-35 High Holborn.

Local Boards

Bennion saw from the start that since the Trust lacked funds its initial success depended on countrywide recruitment and organisation of volunteers from the property world. For this purpose the Trust aimed to set up 32 local boards throughout Great Britain by the end of 1970, as follows-

London (Central)

London (City and Northern)

London (South East) London (North East) London (Barnet and Enfield) London (West) London (Middlesex) London (South West) London (Croydon and Sutton) Beds and Herts Berks Bucks and Oxon Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire Cheshire and Lancashire Cornwall and Devon Cumberland and Westmorland Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Dorset and Somerset Durham and Northumberland Essex

Gloucestershire (including Bristol) Hants and Wilts Herefordshire, Salop and Worcs Kent

Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Rutland

Norfolk and Suffolk

Staffs and Warwickshire

Surrey

Sussex

Yorkshire

North Wales

South Wales

Scotland

The local boards were intended to consist of volunteers drawn from the property world: architects, surveyors, developers, and so on. Bennion's idea was that these would provide expertise in land acquisition, housing development, conversion, and management. They would give their services willingly because, apart from the philanthropic motive on which it was necessary to depend, there would inevitably be professional and commercial advantages accruing to those who assisted in that way. Bennion saw this as a powerful motivating factor, and so it proved.

On 10 October 1969 Bennion drew up an elaborate booklet entitled "*Organisation of Local Boards*". This, given a bright yellow cover, became a familiar feature at Trust meetings up and down the country. The booklet said of the Boards-

"These are the operative arms of the Trust and are vital to its existence as a nationwide housing development and management corporation. To operate successfully, the Boards must strike a delicate balance between being fully autonomous bodies and mere appendages of the central Council. The Trust needs thrustful initiative at local level, but must preserve overall consistency of method and approach . . . The prime function of each Board is to be the embodiment of the Trust within the area, representing the Council and generally promoting WPHT interests. Since working capital is essential, and can be provided in no other way, fund raising will always be an important function-in early days the most vital of all. Boards in areas where the need for rented housing is acute will naturally place great stress on projects for building and improvement. In more fortunate localities the emphasis will be on providing support for the development areas."

The last sentence reflected Bennion's determination that Boards should not be confined to areas of housing need. It was essential that the aid of prosperous areas should be enlisted, particularly for fund raising.

According to the yellow booklet, each Board was to consist of a maximum of fifteen members initially nominated by the Trust's Council as being widely representative of property specialities within the Board's area. Vacancies would be filled by the Board itself, subject to approval by the Council. The Board, subject to the like approval, would elect its officers, namely the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer.

Boards were to appoint committees, not confined to Board members, as needed. However each Board was required to have a Fundraising Committee. The emphasis was on the soliciting of donations through personal visits made by Board members and supporters to wealthy members of the property world in the area. In specifying this method, Bennion drew on his own early experience. It was by carrying out such visits on an extensive scale that he raised the initial finance on which a project of this kind depends if it is to get off the ground at all.

Each Board was required to meet at least four times a year. At its annual general meeting the Board would approve a report to the Council and accounts. The Boards were not spending bodies, and funds raised by the Boards were held by the Trust's bankers and subject to spending decisions by the Council.

The yellow booklet went on to give detailed advice about such matters as the setting up of a Board, the initiation of projects, and liaison with local authorities and other housing associations. The presence of a Board office within the area was highly desirable, but as always finance was the problem. This was the solution recommended-

"Ideally of course, the Trust would have an office and paid staff for each Board, operating in the Board's area. Whether this will prove to be necessary in all cases depends on the growth and effectiveness of the Boards. In early days, however, the question is academic: funds for this are just not available. The setting up of the Boards cannot be deferred until funds are there to service them, since until they are set up funds on the necessary scale cannot be forthcoming. The solution to the problem lies in there being found within each Board's area a firm with surplus office accommodation which it is prepared, as its contribution to WPHT, to make available so as to provide the Board with an office and facilities. If such a firm is able to go further and allow a junior member of its staff to act in a part-time capacity as paid secretary to the Board so much the better. Alternatively, the services of such a staff member might be provided by another firm as its contribution. These services will of course be supplemented by visits from HQ staff, and it is hoped in this manner to enable the Boards speedily to become operative. As soon as funds permit, some permanent offices will certainly need to be provided on the ordinary basis, particularly in the development areas."

Board volunteers were solicited by an advertising campaign in December 1969, using such property world media as The Architects' Journal, The Contractors Journal, Building, The Estates Gazette, and The Solicitors' Journal.

Setting up 32 local Boards within a year was a formidable task for the small Headquarters staff. To ease the problem, the yellow booklet put forward the device of having voluntary workers known as HQ Coordinating Officers (HQCOs). These were competent, enthusiastic Trust supporters who had an address and telephone in or near London. Although not housed at 34-35 High Holborn, they were in constant touch with it. Through an HQCO, the nascent Board could be kept on the right lines. On 7 November 1969 Bennion drew up a further booklet entitled *"Instructions to HQCOs"*. After setting out detailed advice for these key volunteers the booklet ended-

"Remember that the work you are doing is vital to the success of WPHT. It is a humane, compassionate service that you are rendering. Many unhappy, suffering people will have cause to thank you. Deserve their thanks! And. . . keep things moving!"

National Appeal for Funds

On the Trust's formation, the Council decided to launch an appeal for £1m. Bennion visited HRH The Duke of Edinburgh at Buckingham Palace and enlisted his support. The Duke sent the following message in May 1969-

"I am delighted to hear that the property business and construction industry have decided to form the World of Property Housing Trust as their own contribution to the urgent problem of housing the homeless. There always have been, and there always will be, families which do not conform to the standard pattern. They may suffer from any number of awkward and unusual problems which need special treatment. The flexibility of voluntary action is well suited to cope with this problem. I am quite confident that this new project will make an immensely important contribution."

The appeal was announced at a press conference on 2 June 1969, and inaugurated at a Mansion House Dinner on 9 September 1969 attended by the Lord Mayor, Sir Charles Trinder, and the Sheriffs with Bennion in the chair. A handsome brochure was produced by the retained fund-raising consultants, the John F Rich Company. It cited another statement of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, the last sentence of which had particularly influenced Bennion in his decision to set up WPHT as a fund-raising charity-

"The area which attracts the least amount of public attention is that concerning housing and rehousing of large families, those who cannot fit in with the ordinary standard modern housing or those who, for various reasons, have fallen on hard times. These people are permanently at the bottom of the list because they do not have the right sort of points to get in. This is a very big problem and I think it is going to get bigger. There is nothing like enough money going in for charitable housing trusts."

The brochure also contained signed messages from prominent people in the property world. Sir Hugh Wilson, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, wrote-

"Despite all the efforts made in this country over many years we are still faced with a serious housing problem in many urban areas. A great deal of work also has to be done in conversion and improvement if the condition of the existing housing stock and the environment is to be raised to a satisfactory level. Housing Associations can play a vital role in helping to solve these problems in the coming years. I welcome particularly the proposals put forward for the World of Property Housing Trust and have much pleasure in supporting the appeal for the raising of initial capital to establish the project."

Sir Milner Holland wrote-

"I vividly recall the impact made upon me by the evidence presented to the Committee on London Rented Housing, of which I was the Chairman. The squalor and human misery revealed to that Committee were horrifying indeed. I am convinced that the problems of urban housing remain acute and in some respects almost intractable. Their solution can only be achieved by a combined effort which includes every possible source of help; and Housing Associations have a vital contribution to make. I warmly support the World of Property Housing Trust."

Horace Cutler wrote-

"As Chairman of the Greater London Council Housing Committee I warmly welcome the formation of the World of Property Housing Trust, which is backed by so many leading figures in the property world. I see them making a very important contribution to the solution of the nation's housing problem and I wish them every success."

Sir Henry Wells, Chairman of the Commission for the New Towns and of the Land Commission, wrote-

"Many people are now aware of the problem of homelessness and overcrowding, particularly in our great cities. The problem is now beyond the capacity of central and local government to solve. Two things are needed: the first, money; secondly, people who understand property and who are prepared to give their time to Housing Associations such as WPHT and others which WPHT will support financially. I appeal to all those involved in making money out of property to divert some of their energies towards supporting WPHT."

Oliver Chesterton (later Sir Oliver), President of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, wrote-

"I have for many years supported the activities of housing associations and I recognise the importance of continuing and increasing activity by them. The determination of the Trustees of the World of Property Housing Trust to make a real contribution to the nation's housing needs is commendable. Chartered Surveyors are very much part of the world of property and I wish the venture every success."

The appeal brochure set out the following purposes to which the funds raised would be devoted-**administration** *We firmly believe that because an enterprise is charitable and non-profit making this is all the more reason why it should operate with the most efficient administration and organisation possible. To attempt to manage on a shoestring, using makeshift improvised methods, is inefficient and therefore wasteful. WPHT will be a large development and management organisation. It needs expert administrators, architects, surveyors, housing managers and other professional staff. Efficient cost control procedures will ensure all income is effective.*

Working Capital *A development corporation aiming to produce ten million pounds of new or improved housing a year cannot flourish if it is starved of capital. Suitable building sites are scarce, and need to be snapped up-often before all the lengthy procedures leading to loan sanction and payment can be completed. 100% local authority mortgages will usually be available for new developments, but sometimes an authority is unwilling to go beyond 80% or 90% and the gap has to be closed. With conversion and improvement schemes only part of the cost can be met from public finance, and again there is a gap to close. Private loan finance is little used by housing associations, but with the security to investors given by legal advantages not available to other landlords we expect to improve this situation. We shall use every bit of public and private loan capital we can raise - the shortfall can only be met from our own resources.*

Rent rebates *WPHT will grant these in cases of real need. This is of great importance in overcoming human and economic problems of tenants."*

Finally the appeal brochure announced a Naming Scheme. For a donation of £50,000 or over, the donor's name would be given to an estate. For smaller amounts the item named would be as follows-

£20,000 or over, a block or road. £5,000 or over, a house. £2,000 or over, a flat. £500 or over, a communal room.

HM The Queen and HRH Prince Philip made a personal donation of £75. Other early donors included the Duchy of Cornwall, the Stock Exchange, the Greater London Council, the Eleanor Peel Trust, Central and District Properties, Town and City Properties, Greencoat Properties, John Laing, the Hammerson Group, Lonrho, Holloway Sackville Properties, Bovis, Colin Buchanan and Partners, Jones Lang Wootton, Cluttons, Hillier Parker May & Rowden, Drivers Jonas, Dearie and Henderson, and Yattendon Estates. Individual contributions came from Viscount Esher, Sir Arthur Rucker, Sir Arthur Silverstone, and many others. By the end of October 1969 around £60,000 had been raised, with further promises in the pipeline.

"BUILDUP"

In January 1970, making its bow with the new decade, the first issue of a monthly journal of the Trust appeared. Bennion thought up the name BUILDUP for this, as symbolising both the building of houses and the building up of the Trust's nationwide organisation. It was intended as a means of communication with the Trust's helpers and supporters, and a source of income from advertising. The first issue reported the death of Sir Milner Holland, and included a sketch of the first Trust scheme at Bristol and news of proposed developments in South Tottenham and Haringey. It also announced that the following local boards had been set up:

London (City and Northern) (Chairman: J E Neary) Berks, Bucks and Oxon (Chairman: Sir Arthur Rucker) Devon and Cornwall (Chairman: Howard Fleury) Essex (Chairman: Norman Deacon) Hampshire and Wiltshire (Chairman: Guy Jessop) Norfolk and Suffolk (Chairman: Nicholas Twigge) Warwickshire and Staffs (Chairman: A Voaden).

The second issue of BUILDUP, published in February 1970, was enlivened by a sketch (typically unsigned) contributed by Alan Bailey, who has great skill as a cartoonist. It showed the David Dry logo ingeniously portrayed in the shape of a block of flats with the caption: *"They said they were seeking a distinctive Trust personality in their design"*. Fund raising was continued with *"an earnest appeal"* to all members of the property world. So that there should be no doubt who these were, they were specified as-

Architects
Accountants
Builders merchants
Building materials manufacturers
Building surveyors
Civil engineers
Developers
Estate agents
Mortgage brokers
Property companies
Quantity surveyors Solicitors
Structural engineers Surveyors Town planners Valuers

As a further encouragement, the second BUILDUP announced that every person who made a contribution to the Appeal during the first year of the Trust's life would be treated as a Founder of the Trust: *"They will always be commemorated as such, and*

presented with a certificate suitable for framing which will be a permanent witness of their generous idealism". The certificate, measuring twelve and a half by ten inches, had the WPHT motif printed in olive green, adopted as the Trust's distinctive colour.

The letters column included a characteristically witty contribution from Sir Desmond Heap, and the comment by Sir Arthur Rucker that all who held the late Sir Milner Holland's memory in honour and affection would do everything they could *"to ensure the success of the Trust which he did so much to create"*.

A further letter in this second issue is of interest in view of the basic assumption Bennion made in setting up the Trust, namely that housing associations had a large and growing future as alternatives to local authority housing. G P Hall, Director of the National Federation of Housing Societies wrote-

"There is still a lot of work to be done in persuading many local authorities that housing associations can help and assist in providing housing for those in need. Our work is very often supplementary to Council housing, it is never in competition. Associations, being very flexible organisations, can often step in and find a solution to a personal housing problem and so prevent a family having to be taken into care. . ."

The World of Property Housing Trust has made it clear that its policy, as a national body, is to provide housing for the benefit of the public generally, but it wants to include good homes for some of the more unfortunate. This is admirable and will provide that desirable social mix.

We all hope that the lead given by such well known people in forming this Association will encourage the 'Property World' to regard it as their Charity and give it the support it warrants. Its plan to work through Regional Committees will involve many experts at local level who are in touch with local needs ..."

An article by Michael Fenton-Jones struck the same note. WPHT, he said, afforded an excellent opportunity for assisting local authorities and introducing private initiative-

"Through the policy of establishing local boards of professional and business men throughout the country, headed by full-time staff at Headquarters in London, the association should be exceptionally well equipped to work in harmony with local authorities and to encourage the financial support of local people in order to overcome the local housing squalor."

Peter Walker MP, then shadow Minister of Housing, sent a message in which he said that the voluntary housing movement had a unique and expanding role to play in many aspects of housing. He added-

"it is my intention to give all the help I can to housing associations, and I am greatly heartened in this resolve by the production of journals like BUILDUP, which I know will bring about a greater awareness of what can be done."

The second BUILDUP announced the creation of the

following local boards-London (South East) (Chairman: H Woolcott) Essex (Chairman: Norman Deacon) Hants and Wilts (Chairman: R G Faulkner) Norfolk and Suffolk (Chairman: G D Harding) Notts and Derbyshire (Chairman: John Dady)

This issue also contained the first of a series of *"property world"* crossword puzzles compiled by Bennion under the title BUILDUPUZLE.

The third BUILDUP, published in March 1970, commented on the fact that one of the results of heavy publicity for the Trust around the country had been expressions of concern by some small housing associations that they might be *"swamped"*. BUILDUP replied that it was not the Trust's intention to compete for land where other housing associations had schemes in hand, adding-

"The distinctive structure of the Trust, with its Boards covering the whole country and consisting of experienced property people, could prove of enormous value to smaller associations who may not otherwise have access to voluntary expertise on this scale."

In the letters column the architect Sheila Haywood expressed the hope that WPHT would encourage the revival of a genuine urban idiom, in place of the current textbook layouts: *"the muddied grass, the windy 'piazzas' (head down into coat collar, and beat it indoors as quickly as you can)"*. What was wanted, she said, was the *"tightly-knit urban square, the cobbled mews and secluded backyard, the corner shop, great trees growing out of paving, a sudden dramatic view of canal or warehouse"*.

The fourth BUILDUP, published in April 1970, contained an account of the Trust's Wood Green project, described as a rooftop village. It consisted of over 80 dwellings to be built over a shopping complex, the architects being Dry Halasz Dixon. Other Haringey projects mentioned were new building at West Green Road, Stanley Road and Culross Road. A general announcement ambitiously said that WPHT now aimed at providing, by new building or conversion, 2,000 dwellings a year in Great Britain.

In this issue a full-page advertisement by the RIBA headed *"New Slums for Old"* contained prophetic words about the dangers of the current fad for high-rise blocks-

"Much of our new housing takes the form of one class ghettos, which divide and alienate large sections of society. When people are forced to live in brutal, inhuman housing, violence and vandalism are bound to follow."

On 14 April 1970 the Trust arranged a special discussion at the Housing Centre, 13 Suffolk Street, Pall Mall East, at which Bennion was the speaker. His subject was: *"Housing: Mobilising the Property World"*. In conjunction with this an exhibition was mounted at the Centre to show the work of WPHT.

On 5 May 1970 the Trust celebrated its first birthday with a dinner for one hundred people at Grosvenor House, Park Lane. Speeches were made by Alan Bailey, Sir Arthur Rucker, Brian Colborne (Vice-Chairman, Hants and Wilts Board) and Bennion, in that order.

The May 1970 issue of BUILDUP reported that more than half the Trust's local Boards were now operational, and that the following had just been set up-

London (Central) (Chairman: A T Brett-Jones) London (South East) (Chairman: Harold Woolcott) London (South West) (Chairman: Colin Brookes) Beds and Herts (Chairman: R A J Starkey) Kent (Chairman: A J Oakes)

Leicestershire and Northants (Chairman: G H Aspell) Surrey (Chairman: D Walker) Warwickshire and Staffs (Chairman: A Voaden) Scotland (Chairman: J Ainslie Millar)

In reply to the question whether members of Boards would obtain professional and other work through the Board activities, BUILDUP replied-

"The decision as to the use of professional firms or contractors rests with the Boards in the first instance and clearly the Boards will employ the best available advice and services. If a Board member is within an organisation regarded as the best for the Board's purposes, he would be required to declare his interest in the proceedings and take no part in discussions as a Board member on the project with which he is concerned."

In the letters column Paul Torday wrote, in relation to the RIBA advertisement published in the April issue-

"The charitable and social conscience of the property world is being aroused and unified by WPHT. It is the property world which creates man-made environment. Let us hope that WPHT can not only provide homes but help towards providing an environment in which people can live healthier and happier lives."

B Prendergast wrote praising WPHT's Rooftop Village project at Wood Green as maintaining a careful balance between privacy on the one hand and the need for social contact in the "street area". He added-

". . . this scheme has a sense of fun and excitement and well done to WPHT and the Local Authority for creating the right conditions in which the consultants could produce a worthwhile design."

The June 1970 BUILDUP reported that the Trust had to date listed and priced a total of 954 dwelling units at a work value of £4.5m. A further 1642 units were in contemplation. The following additional Boards had been set up-

Gloucestershire, including Bristol (Chairman: D Walker)

Kent (Chairman: A J Oakes)

Charles Leaf, a barrister and HQCO, had been appointed to assist in fund-raising at 34-35 High Holborn.

BUILDUP for July 1970 reported the inauguration of

two further Boards-London (North-East) (Chairman: Malcolm Dean) London (West) (Chairman: D M W Beauchamp)

The August 1970 issue reported that by the end of the year the Trust would have housed forty families. The appointment of Lt Col G E P Cable as Appeal Director was announced. Another Board had been formed-

Lincolnshire (Chairman: John Roberts)

In this issue BUILDUP introduced a new regular feature, which was to prove very useful. This was a

WPHT Directory taking up almost the entire back page of the broadsheet. It listed the membership of the Council, Boards etc, with other useful information. By now four new members had joined the Council, in place of T S Stallabrass, Lewis E Waddilove and Sir Henry Wells, the last of whom had died. These were: G A Hanscomb, Dennis Pilcher (later knighted), Sir Arthur Rucker and E A Vallis.

In its September 1970 issue BUILDUP announced a novel move. The London North-East Board had invited two local MPs, Rt Hon P Gordon-Walker and A E Cooper, to become Co-Patrons of the Board and they had accepted.

By now the circulation of BUILDUP had risen to over 4,000. In the October 1970 issue it was announced that the Trust had adopted as its slogan the phrase "*Charity Begins with Homes*". It is believed that Alan Bailey invented this, though apparently by coincidence the phrase also headed an article on WPHT published in the September 1970 issue of Building Equipment News. This issue of BUILDUP contained among its advertisements one, paid for by their publisher, for two new books by Bennion: *Professional Ethics* and *Tangling with the Law*.

On 15 October 1970 a meeting took place in London between members of what was now coming to be called the Central Council and fourteen Chairmen of local Boards. This was the first such meeting, and proved fruitful. Bennion, as Chairman of the Central Council, presided. He said afterwards, as reported in BUILDUP-

"Although I have attended many Board meetings up and down the country, this was the first time I have met the Board Chairmen as a group. I immediately felt that I was part of a big and growing organisation and the meeting underlined my absolute confidence in the operation we have mounted. I am grateful to them for the time and effort they are giving - many of the Chairmen travelled many hundreds of miles to be with us."

In the same month the Trust issued a new fund-raising leaflet, using the slogan "*Charity Begins with Homes*". Attractively produced in shades of brown, it included a photograph of slum houses with the caption "*the property's world's own backyard . . .*" Among the Central Council members was a new name, that of the developer Gabriel Harrison.

St James's Palace Dinner

On 24 November 1970 a significant event in the Trust's fund-raising drive took place. This was a dinner for 147 people held in St James's Palace at the invitation of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, who was one of the speakers. The Prince was kind enough to say in the course of his remarks-

"I believe that the World of Property' Housing Trust offers the best hope of improving the housing situation for the poor and for the needy and for the displaced. The Trust is the best thing that has happened in housing charity for a very long time."

The other speakers were Rt Hon Peter Walker MP, Secretary of State for the Environment, the Bishop of Southwark (Mervyn Stockwood), Francis Bennion, and his wife Elisabeth. Guests included William Benyon MP, Sir Cyril Black, Sir Edward Caffyn,

Charles Clore, Paul Getty, Lord Llewellyn-Davies, Sir Percy Rugg, the Duke and Duchess of St Albans, Leonard Sainer, and R Seifert. The following are extracts from other speeches, as given in BUILDUP for December 1970.

Mr Peter Walker said-

"... Housing Associations and the Voluntary Housing Movement have become a very important third force in tackling the housing problems of our country . . . I believe this could well become the third choice for people. Today the choice is being a Council house tenant and being an owner occupier, and there is very little else available . . . So I believe this is an exciting future and for this reason I very much welcome the initiative and support of the World of Property Housing Trust."

Francis Bennion said-

"On behalf of the Central Council of the World of Property Housing Trust, I welcome you all to this historic Royal Palace, made available to us through the kindness of Her Gracious Majesty. I feel extremely proud that such a distinguished gathering should have come here this evening to enjoy our hospitality and to hear, I know with sympathy, something about our work and our aims and aspirations for the future. We have not sought to disguise from you that this is a fund raising dinner. You knew what to expect and yet you have given us the pleasure of your company. I am most grateful . . ."

A housing association, such as we are, finances its building projects almost entirely by the use of public money. Each project is self-financing in the sense that rents are adjusted to the amount necessary to pay off borrowing from public funds within a reasonable period. Why then do we need to raise money? There are three main reasons.

First, we have to provide and finance our organisation, since public money is not available for this purpose —rightly, in my view. Secondly, we need a revolving fund for the purchase of land. Without sufficient funds for these two purposes we cannot achieve anything, but when these purposes have been met, we go into the third and most important need for raising money which is simply, to relieve distress. Here we serve the normal functions of a charity — to help those in need. There are many people who for one reason or another cannot benefit from welfare services provided by the state. The great voluntary charities of this country continue to be needed for bridging this gap and for ensuring that our citizens are not entirely dependent on the bureaucratic machine, however efficient. Voluntary work and the voluntary spirit of help for the needy are vital factors in our society, which continue to be much wanted.

We now have a full-time staff of six who work valiantly to support the massive expert voluntary force throughout the country, without which the Trust could not exist.

We have raised, for the purposes I have mentioned, nearly £70,000. I confess to you that though this is a magnificent achievement, representing much hard work and generosity, it is less than some of us would have hoped. It has almost all come in relatively small sums . . .

. . . I come to the most important item of all - our building programme.

- 1. Rehabilitation programme producing 200 dwellings per year in the South Tottenham area-value £1m when fully operational. 1971 expenditure £750,000. First lettings in the scheme 24 November 1970.*
- 2. Similar programmes in Islington, Hackney and other London Boroughs which by the end of 1971 will be worth £8m per year.*
- 3. A scheme for the erection of 41 flats and maisonettes at Berkeley Avenue, Reading - value approximately £170,000. Available for letting from January 1971.*
- 4. A scheme for the erection of 35 houses, flats and maisonettes at West Green Road, Haringey — value approximately £240,000. Tenders being opened on Thursday.*
- 5. A scheme for the erection of 90 of 180 units at Stanley Road and Culross Road, Haringey, as part of a redevelopment plan in conjunction with the local authorities, at a total of over £1m. Commencing June 1971.*
- 6. A scheme for redevelopment of three acres in Ipswich for 50 dwellings, approximately — now in course of planning.*
- 7. Substantial rehabilitation and new works in Colchester, Essex, now in negotiation with the local authority.*
- 8. Ten flats and maisonettes at St Martins, Gospel Oak, Camden - value £52,000.*
- 9. In Gateshead a scheme for the town centre in conjunction with a developer - 240 units-in negotiation with the local authorities.*
- 10. There are many other new projects being negotiated by the Boards — some very advanced — but perhaps the scheme which has received the greatest publicity is the proposed roof-top village in Wood Green. This scheme is for 89 units over a commercial/carpark complex and, not surprisingly, is running into some complications in Mr Walker's Department."*

Board Officers

To end this account of the founding of what later became the Sanctuary Housing Association we record the names of the Chairmen and other officers of the Boards as shown in BUILDUP for Autumn 1971, when the Board system was at its height. The Central Council at that time remained unchanged from that given above. It is noteworthy that every one of the Boards listed below had its local office, the address of which was given in the BUILDUP directory. It is also worth pointing out that of the 63 persons mentioned below who, together with the Central Council, may be regarded as the founders of Sanctuary Housing Association, no less than 34 were chartered surveyors.

London Central: A T Brett-Jones, Keith Speller.
London City & Northern: J E Neary, C H F Fairweather, A H P Gillett.
London South East: Harold T Woolcott, Michael Bowers, Ian Andrews.
London North East: Malcolm J Dean, Roy M Bard.
London Barnet and Enfield: J A Hyams, N C Israel.
London West: D M W Beauchamp, B G Versey.
London Middlesex: Roland P Lay, S Rosenberg.
London South West: Philip Corby, David Dry.
Beds and Herts: R A J Starkey, L Asquith.
Berks Bucks and Oxon: Sir Arthur Rucker, A L Walton.
Cornwall and Devon: A J Culley, J L Beeching, J Radford.
Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire: J G Dady, J B Sermon, B G Pash.
Dorset and Somerset: D A Coombe, T Rider, R M Smart.
Essex: E Dudley Smith, Norman H Deacon, Frank Benson.
Gloucestershire and Bristol: D W Walker, M S Moss, J R Floyd.
Hants and Wilts: P G Jessop, E B L Colborne, R G Faulkner, Mary King.
Kent: A J Oakes, M J Hargreaves.
Lancashire and Cheshire: G C Edwards, N Kingham, H Gilbert, M Hyde.
Lincolnshire: J A Roberts, P H Newlove, A W Reynolds.
Norfolk and Suffolk: N Twigge, David Barrett, A G Barker.
Northumberland and Durham: I M C Hill, A McConnell, J S Deakin.
Surrey (including Croydon and Sutton): R E Shorter, J Malyan, J D Crombie.
Sussex: C Dann, W P Hodgkins.
Yorkshire: J Long, Mrs Trigg.
Scotland: J Ainslie Millar, D Doig, Mrs C Dinkle.

TAILPIECE

Speech by Francis Bennion proposing Edward Erdman as President of Sanctuary Housing Association, 18 March 1987.

Ladies and gentlemen, I beg to propose that Mr Edward Erdman be appointed President of the Sanctuary Housing Association.

This Association, of which I had the honour to be the first Chairman, was established as the World of Property Housing Trust on 5 May 1969. It was set up as a housing association within the meaning of the Housing Act 1957, and was registered with the Charity Commission as a charity.

Such registration was indispensable before serious fund raising could start. Immediate fund raising was essential because the new body had literally no money at all to begin with. Without initial donations it could employ no staff. Neither could it take office space of its own. Yet without a staff and offices it was difficult to raise money. This was a classic chicken and egg situation. How different to the position today, when the Association owns nearly 6,000 dwelling units valued at around £125m, and employs a full-time staff of more than 230.

As its first Vice-Presidents the Trust appointed Lord Holford, Lord Llewellyn Davies, the Duke of St Albans, Sir Robert Matthew, Sir Keith Joseph and Sir Cyril Black. The post of President was initially reserved for one who did much to help the Association on its way in the early days, HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. When I later asked the Duke to accept the post of President he declined on the ground that he could not be seen to show favouritism to one particular housing charity. So until now the post of President has remained vacant.

Mr Erdman, who celebrated his eightieth birthday last year at a memorable party given by the Association, founded the great firm of Edward Erdman & Co more than half a century ago in 1934. He was appointed Chairman of the Central Council of WPHT, as it was then known, on 3 May 1978. So he has been Chairman for nearly nine years.

During that period the Association's housing stock has nearly doubled, and it has concluded some very substantial schemes-many with the particular help of Mr Erdman. Perhaps I might briefly mention one or two of these.

The Denbigh Triangle properties were acquired from Westminster Council. There the Association has provided about 500 dwellings, and there are more to come. Within the Denbigh Triangle, Wolfson House was erected with the aid of charitable donations of over £200,000 raised by the personal efforts of Mr Erdman. Government funding for the Wolfson House project was limited. The only way the scheme could ever have been built was with substantial contributions from the Association, made possible by this fundraising. That harks back to the original concept of WPHT as a fundraising, as well as a build-and-manage, housing charity.

The refurbishment of the Cass Estate in Hackney has been an immense project. Over 500 tenanted houses were acquired by the Association. Mr Erdman took an immense interest in this scheme, and attended fortnightly meetings to resolve many of the initial difficulties.

Finally I might mention the Shadwell Basin development, which is being undertaken by Sanctuary Land Company Limited, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Association. It is clear that this scheme would never have been commenced if it were not for the personal involvement of Mr Erdman, and his negotiating skills.

The Association was originally set up as the special housing charity of the property world. For very many years Mr Erdman has been a distinguished ornament of that world. He has worked hard and long in the service of this Association. It is fitting that we should make him its first President.

I beg to move.