

Union Carbide Is Pressed on Move to Danbury: Housing Assurances Sought

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The Suburban Action Institute has asked the Federal Government to force the Union Carbide Corporation to guarantee that affordable housing will be available to its minority-group employees when it moves its headquarters from Manhattan to Danbury, Conn.

A spokesman for the company said there was "no basis for Suburban Action to predict that minority employees or any others won't be able to accept the opportunity to relocate."

"The findings of our housing consultants indicate that adequate, low-cost housing is available within a 45-minute

commutation of Danbury," he said.

The institute, a private group seeking to break suburban zoning that excludes low-cost housing, filed petitions with the Departments of Labor and Transportation asking them to rule that affirmative action requirements for Federal contractors, and civil rights laws covering Federal expenditures, would be violated by the company's move, expected in 1980.

Housing Assurances Sought

"The Federal Government should demand assurances that Union Carbide will see that land is acquired and housing built for minority employees," said the institute's executive director, Paul David-

off. "And we are calling on the Government to see that this takes place not only for Union Carbide, but for all corporations that move in the future."

The institute's position is that minority employees, who tend to be concentrated in low-paying jobs with the company, will not be able to afford the move because few apartments exist in the Danbury area, and private homes there are out of their price range.

The company, which is now at 270 Park Avenue, wants to move its 3,400 employees to a 500-acre site in Danbury. When the planned move was announced in 1976, company officials said that an

"overriding factor" in the decision was the "long-term quality-of-life needs of our headquarters employees."

However, the move will not be possible unless a \$14 million interchange on Interstate Route 84 is constructed so the employees can be moved efficiently on and off the Danbury site each day. Connecticut has asked for \$15.4 million in Federal funds for the project.

The Suburban Action Institute's petition to the Federal Department of Transportation contends that Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act would prohibit the use of Federal funds for the project because the move by Union Carbide would have a discriminatory effect.

Richard Devine, deputy director of the Office of Federal Contract Compliance within the Department of Labor, said the

petition raised questions that had never before been addressed by the department. "It will have to be examined in great detail, and it would set a precedent," he said.

The spokesman for Union Carbide said that the company will offer workers "personal counseling and financial assistance" to help them through the move. "We're not going to throw these people to the wolves," he insisted. "We think our move will stand as a landmark among corporate moves."

As for the Suburban Action Institute's suggestion that the company should actually acquire land and involve itself directly in having low-cost housing constructed, the spokesman said, "I think they are exaggerating the influence of Union Carbide with the Danbury city planners

and officials of surrounding areas."

In its petition to the Labor Department, the institute noted that the zoning in the area immediately around the company's proposed new site was one acre. It also cited a study by the Connecticut Office of State Planning, which showed a marked trend in the Danbury area to prohibit the construction of apartments.