

where housing and land use are the accidental, inadequate and negative result of other policies, as they are in the new nations, where unguided development is leading to disaster. The issue is more than shelter; it is life.

Habitat

If technology and logic could have solved the world's shelter problems, they would have done so long ago. The issues that Habitat, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, has faced in the meetings ending today in Vancouver, are political, economic and philosophical—the kind of basic needs and value systems that ultimately prove more divisive than unifying among the advanced and developing countries.

Reason and good will have little to do with creating urban order or a humane environment, which makes the Vancouver displays of simple and rational housing and planning designs seem a little sad and abstract, and any declaration of principles not much more than a hope.

This kind of reality, however, does not make Habitat an exercise in futility. On the contrary, Habitat has been an extremely useful and essential exchange of information about the processes and problems of urbanization. The urgency is clear: an estimated 325 million new and replacement housing units are required in a 20-year period, with all of the services that turn shelter into community, involving many areas of human and environmental concern.

How to achieve these goals leads more to controversy than to consensus. The kind of programs and actions acceptable to one nation are not acceptable to another. In the United States, the subject of housing and a planned environment has very low priority. The only point beyond controversy is that nations and society have failed tragically to deal with basic physical needs on a subsistence level in a world with increasing population pressures and a widening gap between rich and poor.

The immediate importance of the conference is the focusing of awareness on this crisis. The measure of Habitat's success, however, will be whether this international consciousness-raising is followed by policy decisions and legislation in the attending countries. It is not enough to agree on the common good.

The need for action is as real in the United States,