Operation Pushaway

THE URBAN Redevelopment and Renewal Program which is in progress in the country's slum-infested cities is generally hailed as a fine thing, and so it is, in terms of replacing ratholes with fine new buildings.

Nobody likes a slum, least of all those who live in one, and so the program is being carried out in a manner that is not just to replacing old buildings with new, but rather to pushing poor people off land to replace them with well-to-do people.

Private developers are in the business for profit. Low-cost housing doesn't yield the profit that high cost housing does, since profits are almost always figured in terms of percentage. Therefore, redevelopment tends to be luxurious, and so costly, to rehouse those displaced.

Of the six housing developments in A-1 of the Western Addition in San Francisco, only one was erected at moderate prices that can be reached by working people. That one is St. Francis Square, a Community Apartments, which was built without a developer's profit and financed by FHA at the low interest rate of three and one-eighth percent. ILWU and FHA both about through sending with pension funds. By the end of this month, the pension fund will get its money back with interest and the owners-tenants will take over with their own officers and board of directors.

Now the Redevelopment Agency is getting ready to clear the A-2 section of the Western Addition. ILWU Local 6 has charged that the agency is making pronouncements calculated to panic residents of the section "into the belief that mass evacuation of their homes is obligatory and inevitable, and that each family would do well to find its own separate solution to the problem of dilocation."

The several ILWU locals in San Francisco have a large number of members in the section and Local 6's proposal to explore formation of a "Tenants League of Resistance" along with other interested organizations has the full backing of the ILWU Northern California District Council.

Local 6 believes that only an organization with bargaining power based upon its ability to mobilize resistance to eviction can force the Redevelopment Agency to get its program into proper perspective. Part of this proper perspective would be to find decent alternative housing for every evicted person before eviction.

Another part of proper perspective, it seems to us, should be to see that redevelopment costs and profits be limited so that the evictees who choose to return to the area may be able to meet the price.

If the purpose of Urban Redevelopment and Renewal is to provide housing for the well-to-do and rich, then the Congress had no business appropriating the $4 billion in grants for local communities. If the purpose is to provide good housing for the presently ill-housed, then that is what it should do.

The tragedy of relocation hits hardest at the Negro people. In fact, urban renewal has been defined as Negro removal. Reportedly none of the 3,200 Negroes who lived in the A-1 section of the Western Addition have returned, and the only Negroes living in the section now are in St. Francis Square which was deliberately designed to be interracial.

We are told that a neighborhood analysis of blight in San Francisco would show that there are areas in which Negroes live which are more decayed, deteriorated, overcrowded and inadequate than was the Western Addition. Yet, it was the Western Addition, heavily populated with Negroes, that was first to meet the bulldozers.

A more deliberate policy of racial exclusion could not be found.