

**THE HOUSING FAMINE, HOW TO  
END IT; A TRIANGULAR DEBATE  
BETWEEN JOHN J. MURPHY,  
EDITH ELMER WOOD, FREDERICK  
L. ACKERMAN**

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The housing famine, how to end it; a triangular debate between John J. Murphy, Edith Elmer Wood, Frederick L. Ackerman by John J. Murphy & Edith E. Wood & Frederick L. Ackerman

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# **THE HOUSING FAMINE**

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## HOW TO END IT

*A Triangular Debate*

BETWEEN

JOHN J. MURPHY

EDITH ELMER WOOD

FREDERICK L. ACKERMAN



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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON THE DEBATERS

**John J. Murphy**

Born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1865. Having completed, with much success, his high-school course, he entered the University, but family needs compelled him to abandon his studies. He came to New York in 1882 and experienced many of the hardships of the friendless immigrant. Here he came in contact with the housing problem, in the acute form in which it presents itself to the actual tenement dweller, for in those days regulation was unknown. For several years he worked at engraving and printing for the support of his family, wrote articles for papers and magazines and participated in several economic reform movements, among others, the Henry George campaigns. He became interested in the Good Government movement, and in 1901 was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Citizens Union. In 1903 he was elected Secretary of the City Committee of the Citizens Union, a position which he held until 1909. During these years he was active in the Municipal Art Society, the Reform Club and the National Society of Craftsmen, of which latter body he was Secretary for two years. In 1909 he was Secretary



of the Transit Committee of the Reform Club and directed a successful campaign for the exemption of the Subway and Dock Bonds from the computation of the city's debt. In this work he first met Judge Gaynor, whom he induced to support the measure, although previously opposed to it. On Judge Gaynor's election to the Mayoralty, he was appointed Tenement House Commissioner, an office which he held through the administration. When Mayor Mitchell was elected, he retained him in office. In January, 1919, the Tenement House Committee appointed him its Secretary, a position which he still holds.

### **Edith Elmer Wood**

Edith Elmer Wood is the daughter of the late Commander Horace Elmer, United States Navy, and the wife of Captain Albert Norton Wood of the same service. These navy connections account for her having lived at various times in Europe, Asia and the West Indies, as well as on the Atlantic, Pacific and lake coasts of the United States.

Mrs. Wood is a graduate of Smith College and of the New York School of Social Work and holds the degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy (in Political Science) from Columbia University.

She is the mother of four sons, one of whom, the late Captain Thurston E. Wood, 12th Field Artillery, was killed in action during the World War.

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She has always taken a keen interest in matters of health and public welfare. While her husband was stationed on the island, she founded the Anti-Tuberculosis League of Porto Rico and was for a number of years its president, during which time it was awarded a special gold medal by the 1908 International Congress on Tuberculosis for its achievements.

Mrs. Wood has been a contributor to various magazines and is the author of a number of works of fiction and travel, among which are *The Spirit of the Service*, a navy story of the Spanish War period, and *An Oberland Châlet*, a unique contribution to the out-of-door literature of Switzerland. She has devoted increasing thought of recent years to civic questions, and for several years past has centered her attention on the housing problem. An article of *Constructive Housing Legislation and its Lesson for the United States*, which appeared in *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects* in February, 1918, struck a new note and attracted much attention. Her book, *The Housing of the Unskilled Wage Earner* (Macmillan, 1919), which *The American Journal of Sociology's* review hailed as "the first thoroughly scientific discussion of the problem in the United States," has been widely accepted as an authority.

### **Frederick L. Ackerman**

Graduate and Residence Fellow, College of Architecture, Cornell. Sigma Xi. Pupil of Duquesne,

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Paris. Sometime Lecturer in Architecture and Theory of Planning, Cornell and Columbia.

Member of the State Board for the Registration of Architects, New York State, 1916 to date.

Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Accredited representative of the American Institute of Architects and the Labor Division of the Council of National Defense to England 1917. Purpose of trip to investigate British War Housing schemes. Result of investigation published in *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, and later issued in publication entitled *What is a House?*

Member of the Mayor's original Congestion Committee; Committee on City Planning of the City Club, New York; Committee on City Planning, the American Institute of Architects.

Author of *The New Education of the Architect* (originally published in *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*), and a series of articles for *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, entitled *Where Goes the City Planning Movement?*

Contributor to various publications upon subjects having to do with housing, town planning, architecture, etc.