

Fogle Opposes Housing Again

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Raises Voice in Protest Against Low-Cost Project for Columbia

To the Editor of The State:

Like Banquo's Ghost, the "federal housing project" will not down. Not all cities are suited to such projects and not all cities want them, as the records will show. It appears to the writer that Columbia has no need of them.

I dislike to encroach upon your valuable space and time in view of my former efforts anent this matter. But I crave your patience and indulgence once more; for, if anything is to be done, now is the time for united action.

Our government was established, among other purposes, to promote the general welfare. Now, is it for the general welfare to tax one class of citizens for the benefit of another? Is it for the general welfare to drive out tenants who are able hardly to pay the lowest rentals for a class of tenants who are able to pay the higher rentals in homes where they have been living? Is it for the general welfare to deprive the city, state and county of taxes now on the books in order to erect these projects on an area where no taxes will be paid, either on land or buildings? Is it for the general welfare to have such losses made good by citizens who are already overburdened by property and income taxes? Is it for the general welfare to borrow money for years to come in order to benefit the few at the expense of the many?

One of the chief reasons ostensibly given for the erection of these projects is that it will aid in "slum clearance." In entering upon any new enterprise, it is important, first, to count the cost, other things being equal. Which plan is more feasible for "slum" clearance: to build housing projects or to lay out parks in such areas? The cost certainly would be far less in landscaping the area than in building those projects; and the cost of such parks could be borne by the city, as that environment would inure to the happiness of a far larger population than that of the area on which the housing projects would be built.

Another plan for slum clearance is for the government to condemn unsanitary tenant buildings, furnish the money for improving the buildings and grant the owners a long term of years in which to repay the loans. And the cost would certainly be far less than in building large new structures at a stupendous outlay. And poor tenants might afford to pay the rentals in such rehabilitated houses; certainly, they could not pay the rentals demanded in the housing projects, and the improvements might be made with the tenants remaining in the buildings.

A superb plan for promoting the general welfare is by establishing new industries even at the cost of a few years' taxes; for the payrolls would soon make good the loss sustained in taxes and at the same time would promote the general welfare, in addition to the happiness of the individual citizen. Shirt and collar factories, pants and overall manufacturing, ladies' dresses, hosiery mills, factories for making farming implements, men's and women's underwear and automobile factories are among the many industries that could be named for establishment in Columbia and which would furnish money for the workers, as well as, aid in putting money into general circulation.

As our city is sadly in need of more payrolls, I would urgently impress upon the minds of city council to implore the administration for aid in the establishment of new industries or get its consent to use the "housing" money for this purpose. Some people wonder why the North has advanced so much more rapidly in material prosperity than the South. In addition to the loss of slaves, in which the wealth of the South largely consisted before the Confederate war, one of the chief reasons for the South's continued poor material condition is the dearth of manufacturing establishments. As an indication of the need of business uplift in Columbia, take a look at the number of stores for rent on Main street.

Columbia is not in need of more houses and apartments; if you think so, just drive over the city and note the number of for rent and sale signs on houses in all sections of the city; also look over properties for rent in Sunday's issue of The State. And when the federal agencies are removed from Columbia which must inevitably come to pass, then we shall see a slump that will hurt; unless the city and private parties provide for additional payrolls.

I dislike to sound a pessimistic note—in fact, I am temperamentally inclined to be an optimist, but we must face the facts. The real estate market has undergone a decided change in the last ten years: Rentals have been reduced, at least, 25 per cent., and real estate values have been depressed from 35 per cent. to 60 per cent.

Why should any government so handicap real estate values that the market becomes stagnated, despite the fact that realty has been the basis of all wealth since the dawn of civilization? It has borne the burden of taxation for many years. Then why not try to help instead of hamper it? Why "kill the goose that laid the golden egg"?

We do not have to accept this housing money if we do not need it for that purpose, though our city fathers have applied for it. Council can advise the administration of the fund that conditions have been changed so that it would not be wise to build another project of that kind in Columbia. However, the city could profitably utilize the money in building new industries, which are sorely needed here.

If council should not elect to take the initiative in this matter, I suggest that it issue a call to the taxpayers for an election upon this question, and allow the property owners only to vote on the matter, as they are the ones most vitally interested. If this is done, our posterity will rise up to commend us for this far-sighted and far-reaching procedure.

AUGUSTUS W. FOGLE.
Columbia.