

WSM MARCH 31, 1946

Good Morning, Friends:

Housing, food and politics were the principal items on the Capitol's menu during the week just ended. All of the nation's pressing problems eventually find their way onto the floor of the Congress. This is true of the housing shortage and Congress spent practically the entire week discussing and voting on various proposals to relieve the acute housing situation.

Now that so many servicemen have returned one can easily understand why there is such a shortage of houses; but there was an acute shortage even before the war ended. The shortage prevails not only in the cities but out into the small towns and even in most of the villages of the entire nation.

There are several reasons for this. For one thing, there has been a very large increase in the population within the last decade and perhaps an equally large proportionate increase ^{in the No} of families. At the same time, we have had this increase in population and families, home construction was virtually stopped during the war except in strategic and critical areas. All kinds of building materials were scarce and vitally needed for war purposes. In the meantime a goodly number of houses have either ^{burned,} become dilapidated, ~~burned~~ or otherwise ^{become} ~~rendered~~ ^{fit} ~~unusable~~ for human habitation. So, like a candle burning at both ends, the supply of houses has become less while the demand was rapidly growing. One result has been a large increase in the price of homes. This price increase is particularly ^{hurtful} ~~damaging~~ to servicemen who have had no chances to earn big money in the last 2, 3, 4, or 5 years. Also, it is hard on them for another reason. As they come home and look for houses, they find them all

filled up mostly, of course, by people who have not been to war. I talked to a veteran a few days ago and he said that when he was called to the Army he had

to sell his home. He had a mortgage on it and he thought ~~that~~ the best thing

to do. ^{was to sell it.} He sold it, he said, for sixty-five hundred dollars. After being in

the Army three years, ^{while} ~~with~~ his wife and children living ^{and} ~~with~~ her people, he came home and tried to rebuy his house and was asked twelve thousand dollars for it.

"I couldn't afford to pay that," he said to me, "I ^{just} don't have the money and every time I go to rent a house I find the house either filled up already or

a rent so high I can't pay it." He ~~then~~ ^{then} said he ^{then} decided to build a home, as so many other people want to do, but there again, he was stymied, he said.

Building materials were so high he couldn't afford to build and even if he could afford it he was unable to buy materials even at high prices.

"As a consequence," he said, "my family and I are living ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~in the home~~ of my in-laws and it just isn't working out." "I fought for this country and I am proud that I did, but I want to be able to either rent, buy or build a home, a home for me and my family and us alone," he said. ^{now} I tell of this conversation because it is typical of so many others, typical of letters Members of the House and Senate are receiving ^{from one end of the country to the other.}

We need three million new houses -- not within the next five years, not next years, but now. Of course, there is no way to wave ^{a magic} ~~the~~ wand and create three million new houses over night, they can only be created by expenditure of a lot

of work, ^{and} sweat, and material. ^{holding} The shortage of materials is the first bottleneck.

A very large percentage of the building materials is now being used in non-residential construction. So, one obvious ~~the~~ need is to channel building

supplies into construction of homes; but this is not enough because with the normal supply of building materials we would only build about three hundred thousand new homes within the next 12 months. Three hundred thousand would be only one-tenth of the three million we need. Obviously, then, no ordinary program is going to do the job. We need, as President Truman said to Mr. Wilson Wyatt, the Housing Administrator, "~~do not bring in a~~ ^{no} small program, we want a big plan." If this job is to be done we must approach it in the same way we undertook to build five thousand planes per year. Some people high in public life said that was impossible. Almost nothing is impossible for the people of the United States. *50 m planes, and many more, were built.*

We need three million homes and we ought to roll up our sleeves and *and sit at it* build three million homes ~~forthwith~~. When we needed more ammunition, more planes, more guns and more tanks for soldiers and sailors to fight with during the war, Congress did not hesitate; but after they ^{made} fought for us and now ^{won the war} have come home and need roofs over their heads, ^{the Rep + Democrats in} Congress ²⁰ ~~has~~ into a political argument.

President Truman, Mr. Wyatt and the Democrats ^{+ some democrats} offered a program which they said would do it, but the Republicans ^{the Rep + Democrats in} would have none of it. They said ^{dem's} the ~~Democrat's~~ program would not do the job and even if it would, it was the wrong way to do it, so they offered a plan of their own. Both sides said their plan was the free enterprise way. It's all right to preserve the sanctity of free enterprise. I believe in free enterprise to the depths of my soul, *but*

(add)

Well, Food, something no one can do without, continues
as high as the Capitol agenda

President Truman feels that the famine threatening millions of human beings in Europe and Asia can only be headed off by Americans sharing ^{some of} their bountifulness. The President wants to avoid further rationing of foods, so he has appointed a Committee of twelve distinguished Americans, headed by former President Herbert Hoover, to work out a program of voluntary reduction in food consumption.

The President has seen what happens when ^{a specific commodity is singled out.} He announced his order that a little more of the grain of wheat should be used in flour ^{instead of using} ~~than to take only~~ part of it and throw ⁱⁿ the other part into bran and shorts. What happened? Many, many people rushed to the stores and bought enough flour to last them for many months, with the result that flour is now scarce. ~~for the~~ That is for those ^{who hadn't got it stored up.}

So President Truman is undertaking to enlist the undoubted sympathy of the American people with the starving men, women and children of Europe and Asia in a voluntary sharing of food. *I hope it works.*

One ^{man} ~~fellow~~ said to me, "I am not going to share my food with Germans."

Now I can understand how this gentleman can hate Germans but I also believe ~~that~~ that if he had seen, as I have seen, little children who had nothing to do with bringing about the war, who in fact were not even born when the war started, in pains of starvation, he, too, would have been willing to share.

American is a Christian nation, christian not only in practice but at heart. She is ~~going to~~ good to the ^{poor} ~~poor~~. I believe President Truman's program will have results. When an appeal is made to the better instincts, to the the understanding, and sympathy, the christianity of the American people to share and share voluntarily I believe she will do it.

my soul, but I do not believe that there is any sacred-cow entitlement in free enterprise to resist constructive change and improvement. Or to tenaciously cling to limitations and habits they have had during the past 10, 20, or 30 years.

As Wilson Wyatt said, ~~you~~ cannot do this job with business as usual. ~~You~~ will do it under the capitalistic system, ~~you~~ will do it under free enterprise, but ~~you~~ will see a progressive, free enterprise change a few of the old rules and musty habits of the game. That has happened in countless times in America and it has made our country great.

DEAD HAND OF THE PAST

If we had listened to the argument of the buggy whip manufacturers, of the men who made the shafts, we would not have had an automobile industry today. If we had listened to the arguments of the ice people we would not have electric refrigeration today. Almost every single step in America's progress toward prosperity has resulted in the free enterprise industrial system being alive to meet modern conditions.

I can see no great danger, no socialistic housing program as some have ~~reared at this legislation~~, when we simply recognize as a Congress, as a free people, that we have a gigantic task to do and we must do it in the progressive American way.

NEED 2,700,000 HOMES

Let us see what this job is. There are 2,700,000 homes needed in this country today for veterans. The very best estimate that you can get under present techniques, that you can get under the laissez-faire policy of "let well enough alone," not giving any help to the veteran or to the builder who is trying to help the veteran, is about 300,000 homes per year—600,000 homes versus 2,700,000 homes in 2 years.

There is prosperity and employment for the returning veterans when we help them to build their own homes, when we permit them to work for men who we have helped in getting priorities and materials to build these homes. This is far better than having those veterans homeless, walking the streets, jobless, discouraged, drawing unemployment compensation from their Government. They do not want to do that.

\$20 per week.

I think

tradition in this industry or that industry it is called socialistic housing.

This is a bill designed to enable free enterprise to become bigger, better, more efficient, and to meet the needs of an America that is somewhere between five and six million houses short of fulfilling the land of promise that every soldier thinks he is returning to.

MATERIALS MUST BE EXPANDED

We cannot possibly build anywhere near the number of houses that we need and must have with the materials that are available today. You can blame the OPA if you want to; you can criticize the bureaucrats and all that, but ~~you~~ all know there have been many other factors besides the OPA involved in this thing. I remember about a 3-months strike after VJ-day on the Pacific coast which stopped almost all lumber production. It was a labor difficulty, perhaps. Maybe it was a sit-down against paying further excess-profits taxes up to the January 1 deadline.

There are many causes for the material shortages. Take your labor trouble, your dislocation by reason of the war, your repeal of the excess-profits taxes—these are only a few. The OPA is not alone to blame. I grant you that there are many cases where you can single out grievous errors that have been made in the pricing of housing material, but I also know that there have been dozens and dozens of price increases given, and yet as these price increases were given, you still did not get the production you sought for. It still dries up. Somehow price alone does not determine production that is needed and it terminates whether we are to build these homes for the returning veterans.

PRODUCTION INCENTIVES

I propose to have a recommended by the President's program to have a certain material production program.

So I think, figure sounds when you break of these 2,700,000 something slight cost of the whole cent expenditure flood of material blesome bottleneck only a few of them into full this House can effect that.

We have a move temporary going to be the Senate then going through housing and use only the agency sit about the housing that a written goal ing use the

Unless we have a huge house building program there will arise a great demand for public housing, partly covered housing projects. I much prefer housing in the form of small units in them.