

PEOPLE'S COLUMN

The Eccentric welcomes letters for this column. All must be signed, but signatures will be kept confidential upon request. Letters must be limited to 500 words.

I am in favor of public parking lots. The convenience of being able to park near where I shop has so many advantages that I don't see how anyone can object to them. Still, as I consider the method of securing municipally owned and operated parking lots, it raises a number of questions in my mind.

First, I understand that the representatives of the merchants, who have been pushing public parking for some time, have told our city commission frequently that the city should assume the larger share of the cost. This would indicate their belief that the taxpayer will enjoy the major benefit. Our Chamber of Commerce estimates that Birmingham is a shopping center for 35,000 persons, while the population is about 13,000. It would seem then, that as a taxpayer, I would be underwriting the purchase of parking lots for the convenience of motorists, more than half of whom live outside of Birmingham.

In a recent decision the State Supreme Court ruled that parking meter revenue can be used for the purchase and operation of such lots. The way is being opened for financing the venture, though another case hearing on taxation for this purpose, is still pending.

However, when the use of city funds is in question, no matter where they derive from—is a matter of vital importance to every taxpayer to know they will be used to benefit the majority, and for a cause that has priority on the schedule of things to be done.

By acquiring parking lots, it seems to me, the merchants and owners of business property will benefit most. In fact, in several cities, the merchants have pooled their resources and purchased the lots and turned them over to the city for operation. Owners of buildings used for business, merchants, and landowners in the business section of Birmingham (Maple Woodward area, I believe, are well equipped to do likewise. The merchants in other places who have purchased the lots consider a parking place for their customers a business necessity.

In the erection of retail chain stores, parking lots are now considered as necessary as shelves on which to place merchandise. New stores coming to Birmingham will provide parking space. As a taxpayer of modest means, I do not like to be asked to buy parking lots, or at least pay a major share of the cost, so that the merchants may in some sections continue to enjoy trade—most of which comes from beyond the city limits. There are still further and more important issues involved.

The right of condemnation. There does not seem to be any doubt in the minds of many of our city officials that they now possess the right to condemn private property—improved or unimproved—for parking.

A former mayor pointed out the danger of surrendering this right to our city government. Such condemnation in the business section would make our city the manager and owner of some of our most valuable real estate. It is easy to understand how dangerous this might become in unscrupulous hands.

It is the present plan, I believe, to enlarge the lots, once acquired, as the need arises. Therefore, private property adjacent to the lots would face the constant threat of confiscation.

I have great faith in the good

Judgment of our present city commission—future governments here might possibly yield to pressure groups with an axe to grind. Using the right of condemnation we would be authorizing the confiscation of the property of one business man (usually at his loss and therefore injurious to him) to provide a parking lot for the customers of another. I don't think any taxpayer wants to trade such civil rights, as are involved here, for a place to park his car.

In a day when many deplore the intrusion of government into private business, it seems we in Birmingham are in danger of handing over to our municipal government sweeping powers that have been jealously guarded since the founding of our country.

There is still a further advantage to established business in the acquisition of publicly operated parking lots by condemnation—and that is, that at one stroke it takes out of the market many locations on which competition

might possibly encroach within a given area.

I do not want to imply that this is in any sense the intention of the group here seeking public parking lots. It is nonetheless a fact worth remembering.

One more word on condemnation—I have tried to find out where in this state or any other, condemnation proceedings have been used to acquire public parking lots as such—and cannot find one case. If this is true, it is highly probable that the city will face expensive litigation which will tie up the program and use money better spent for badly needed streets, water mains, etc.

For more than a year now constant pressure has been exerted to get the city to acquire public parking lots. The mayor has appointed a committee to study the question; the Chamber of Commerce another to help them. There have, and will be, many meetings on the subject. If there is any doubt in anyone's mind as

to where the benefits lie, all they need to do is observe who is pushing the cause most vigorously.

I am writing this in the hope of arousing some interest, and so that the taxpayers may express their real intentions when they go to the polls to vote on the question. The city of Birmingham needs a lot of bread and butter things—sewers, water mains, a water softener, new schools—the list is long, the needs urgent—city taxes are going up, and so are school taxes.

It is my belief that it would be just and fair for the landowners and business people of Birmingham who stand to benefit most by public parking lots—to take this burden off the taxpayer—to do what the merchants of many other cities have done—purchase the lots for the protection and prosperity of their business.

DONALD MCGRAW,
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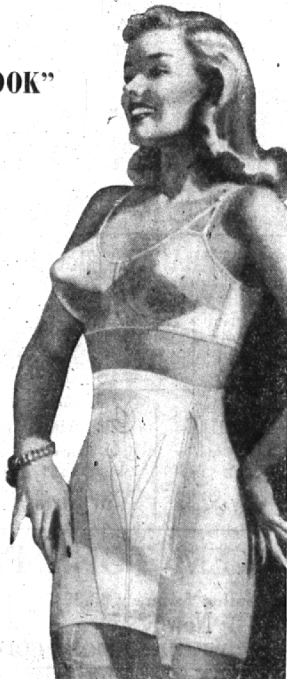
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CITY OF BIRMINGHAM BUILDING ALTERATION

Bids will be received in the office of the Director of Public Works, Municipal Building, Birmingham, Michigan, until 2:00 P. M., Wednesday, April 13, 1949 for supplying all materials and for performing all work necessary to alter three (3) buildings, in accordance with the plans and specifications.

Plans and specifications may be obtained at the office of the Director of Public Works. A deposit of five dollars (\$5.00) will be required for each set. This deposit may be refunded by returning the plans and specifications in good condition, within one week after bids are opened. A certified check, suitable bid-bond, in the amount of not less than five percent (5%) of the total bid price, shall accompany each bid.

- A. For Building No. 1 only
- B. For Building No. 2 only
- C. For Building No. 3 only
- D. For all three
- E. Estimated completion date

C. L. LELAND, Director of Public Works, Local Advt. 5-21-49.

CITY OF BIRMINGHAM MICHIGAN NOTICE

SERVICEMEN AND VETERANS' HOMESTEAD TAX EXEMPTIONS

- If you are:
1. A veteran of the Spanish American War.
 2. A veteran of World War No. 1 and have a service or non-service connected disability recognized by the United States Veterans Administration upon which compensation is paid.
 3. A soldier or sailor of World War No. 2.
 4. A veteran of World War No. 2 who has been discharged from service in less than one year.
 5. A veteran of World War No. 2 who has a service or non-service connected disability recognized by the United States Veterans Administration upon which compensation is paid.
- Then you are entitled to homestead tax exemption on \$2,000.00 of assessed value, providing:
1. You own and occupy property as a homestead.
 2. Do not own property assessed at more than \$7,500.00.
 3. Make application sometime between April 1st and May 14th.
- Application may be made at the office of the City Assessor, Municipal Building, who will assist you.
- We respectfully suggest that application be made as soon after April 1st as possible.
- Elmer W. Mack, Assessor
City of Birmingham, Michigan

STATE OF MICHIGAN—In the Office of the Drain Commissioner of the County of Oakland.

In the Matter of the Beverly Manor No. 1 Sanitary Sewer Drain.

Notice is hereby given, that on the 10th day of March, 1949 a petition was filed with the undersigned County Drain Commissioner for the County of Oakland praying for the locating, establishing and constructing of Beverly Manor No. 1 Sanitary Sewer Drain.

That upon the 23rd day of March, 1949 the undersigned filed with the Honorable Arthur E. Moore, Judge of Probate, a petition asking for the appointment of a Board of Determination.

That said Judge of Probate having appointed Evert M. Baughman, E. V. Blanchard, Charles Van Baskin as such Board of Determination.

Now, therefore, said Board will meet at Intersection of 13 Mile Rd. & Sheridan Ave. in SE 1/4 Sec. 15, Township 36 North, Range 12 East of April, 1949, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of said day to determine the necessity of Beverly Manor Sanitary Sewer No. 1 Drain.

Therefore, all persons, municipalities and highway officials interested in the proposed locating, establishing and constructing are requested to be present if they so desire.

Dated at Pontiac this 21st day of March, 1949.

EARL L. CLARK
County Drain Commissioner
of the County of Oakland

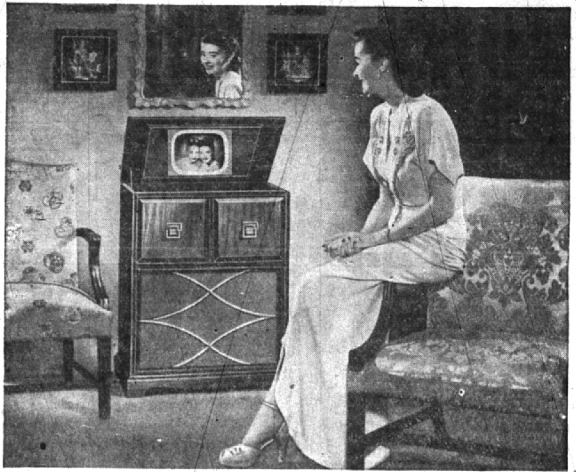


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