

# PUBLIC FORUM

Editor, WILMETTE LIFE:

Flat advocates propose big tax increase on Wilmette homes!

That is scarehead today—but if flats come, it will be the literal truth. Every home owner will pay increased taxes, if flats come.

Some will sing "Who's afraid of the big, bad flats?" Why cry "wolf" they say when the flat question is dead in Wilmette.

Flats aren't dead and they never will stay dead because flat advocates have the profit motive. Those who want flats either have land to sell or buildings to build—in both cases with profit to themselves. The speculative dollar may retire, but it never sleeps. Citizens do.

## Why Flats Increase Taxes

It is common knowledge that flats increase the school load, the fire load and the police load more than their taxes amount to. The deficit is paid for by bigger taxes on single homes.

Take schools. It costs just as much to put a child from a flat through common school as a child from a home. But the tax paid for the flat child is less than that paid by the home for its child.

Suppose the flat costs \$6,000 for each family it houses and the home \$12,000 and the same tax rate applied to both. Is it hard to see who pays the freight?

Undoubtedly an honest government costs the citizen less than a dishonest one. Does anyone doubt that an honest government is more natural to a home owned town than to one with a large number of easily shifting flat dwellers?

Flats burn soft coal. Homes burn cleaner fuel. Soft coal smoke makes the home owner paint oftener and clean drapes oftener. It dirties the air we breathe and thus makes less healthful living.

Have we proved the headlines of

this article? Are flats needed for young marrieds—or is it houses?

Flat advocates work on sentiment, pleading that there is no place in Wilmette for the young marrieds. We need straight thinking to connect need and ability to pay. The simple truth is that young marrieds have trouble in paying more than \$35 a month rent. Rents can't be made cheaper in Wilmette, nor even as low as in Evanston, where unlimited areas are zoned for unbuilt flats.

Why should we not underwrite with village credit a bond issue to build low priced homes for young folks in the wide open spaces we annexed to Wilmette a few years ago? The houses would not be rented but sold with little down and the rest paid by monthly payments over 20 years. Would the young folks buy them?

It may be doubtful if under the Towns and Villages act we could pledge municipal credit for housing. That wouldn't matter—a way could be found. If there be losses, better pay for homes than flats.

The open spaces of our annexed areas are broken backed with assessments we did have the law to saddle upon them. Why not try to use some of this over-assessed land for modest homes if they are needed for the young marrieds?

## The Blighted Zone

Much concern is expressed properly for the decadent zone next to business. Suppose in the future we are always as careful to keep business up to standards of beauty and cleanliness? Go look at the Pure Oil station on Green Bay road just south of Kenilworth station (it is in Wilmette) and note the nice house built almost across the street from it in Kenilworth. Note the Standard Oil station on Winnetka avenue and the house right next to it near the Indian Hill station—or the Standard Oil station at Lake in Wilmette. Then think out just how much gradation you feel necessary between business properly housed and residences?

Don't make dejected business appearance the sole reason for putting up soul destroying flats. Possibly duplex houses of pleasing design would be the proper structures for the twilight zone. The duplex zone might be a fairly broad band in some sections—for instance in the neighborhood of the "L."

It should by no means be necessary for the community to make good the losses of owners on old properties near the business section any more than of an old wornout house far removed from business. Houses wear out the same as clothes—only it takes longer—a generation or so—and should be made over or discarded. When a wornout house is next to business, might it not be rebuilt if the owner had no hope of having the land zoned for flats if he just let it run down some more?

## A Drive to Soften the Building Code

The building code was made what it is in part to keep out flats. Any softening of the building code toward easier flats, is a change of sentiment, not a proof of need. It is announced that the code needs revision. Undoubtedly because of the advance in use of materials, but step warily.

In the Wilmette Civic league meeting recently, a man who has for years been a stalwart against flats was heard

say, "they will come." Why will they come? That man is an old war horse who has carried more than his share of civic work. He has borne the brunt of battle long and should be relieved—he is tired and willing to compromise or give up.

The answer is not to give up to flats but to yield leadership to younger men who have come to Wilmette to raise families. They must pick up the gauge.

Our present administration was elected on a platform pledged against flats. These men were carefully selected and are the kind that keep their pledge. But their hands must be held up. The responsibility of resisting flats belongs to all citizens.

The committee having the revision of the zoning ordinance and the committee of the board having building code revision in hand should keep the public informed of changes thought about through the columns of WILMETTE LIFE and by speakers before the various citizen's organizations. Then when a public meeting and hearings are finally held an informed citizenry can express its will.

Experts might be called in. A great university has a 5-year course on city planning and administration. Suppose its theory and planning were called upon to throw light into our twilight zone? Even closer at hand and always fair, knowing and willing is Robert Kingery of the Chicago Regional Planning commission.

## A Job for the Harmony Convention

Well might the administration call upon the Harmony convention as a citizens' committee to share its responsibilities to the village in finding the best thing to do in zoning, revision of the building code, parks and playgrounds and like jobs. The few people constituting the board of trustees and other boards should not be asked to do all the sacrificing. Wilmette is full of ability in business administration and civic affairs. The Harmony convention could help make that ability useful and help place Wilmette more to the front of north shore villages.

Assuredly they come because they want to enjoy all of its assets as a home town—our beautiful trees, our magnificent beach, our schools, our friendliness from being neighbors. They come because they want to get away from conditions that flats breed. Whoever heard of a new home owner in Wilmette advocating flats? Is there one to speak? They come because they want to enjoy home life of the kind to be found here. Let's keep it that way and make it better.

—D. P. Clemons.

## CONVALESCING

Mrs. Frank Alles of 1612 Wilmette avenue is convalescing from an operation undergone at the St. Francis hospital, and will be able to receive visitors in a few days. Mrs. Alles has been in the hospital for about ten days.

Mrs. Lawrence H. Dudley of 414 Warwick road, Kenilworth, had visiting her for several weeks in October, her sister, Mrs. David G. Boyd of Toronto, Canada. Mrs. Dudley had just returned from a fortnight's visit with her daughter, Mrs. Carroll H. Wendell of Pittsburgh, when Mrs. Boyd arrived from Canada.

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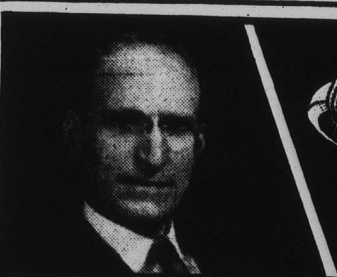
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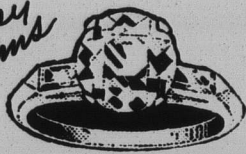
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