Housing: Relation to Unemployment - a course that needs built -

The old age pension should end up with a few lines on the part home plays in old age security - the cheapest kind of a home. It also has the relation of a house of any character to old age security and here comes in Mr. Murray's plan for the permanent rehabilitation of the unemployed. That the unemployed is an essential element in old age security. Of course here he is creating a demand for his steel houses. It is a form of a subsistence homestead only if the subsistence homestead is within the reach of those of small, or practically no savings; a $1000. house to start with and five acres of land in the neighborhood of great factories that have been withdrawn from cultivation. It would give the man something to go on in his idle time, and normally it must be remembered that the factory worker never has continuous employment, that he probably has at the best three months of unemployment. All of which is not taken into consideration in the talk about wages. Here is something then for the man to do in his idle time, which of course is a development of Mr. Ford's scheme. He proposes promotion strictly in the interest of the unemployed and not in the interest of building associations or promoters, something that could be made an adjunct for the great industry perhaps. Also it gives an outlet for Mr. Murray's steel plate.

But how all these things pull together in the social program. The product of the inventor and the experimentor in great industries, the necessity of his product being placed if he is to go on

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with it once it has been proved to be better than that which has been used or to meet a need better than any existing product meets it. A steel house will meet it better than wood, brick, cement, was in the minds of those who are so enthusiastic over it.

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Housing:

Talked with Madam Agresti about the housing program. Told her of my interview with Mussolini which interested her. See account in notes. It was she who arranged for me to see the housing for the white collared people. I asked her about the tenement ~~side of Rose~~ south of Rome, for what she calls the evicted. She says that has gone on steadily. The advantages are that the rent is as cheap as in the quarters they ~~advertise~~ left - quarters destroyed. They have more space; they have water and sanitation, which ~~was~~ were was very sketchy. They are so close to the city that getting back and forth cannot be very difficult.

She says that the housing campaign is pretty well advanced in all the towns and that in spite of the war the rural housing campaign is going on. A survey of the whole country outside of the towns ~~is~~ has been made. Houses are catalogued ~~according to the~~ hopeless, ~~horrible~~ redeemable and good. I judge from what she says that most of them are hopeless, and these are being torn down and modern houses put up. The crux of the Italian ~~cities existing~~ housing campaign is that houses suitable fo the means of the people are built. There is no such indulgence as our housing experts allow themselves - the fun of building a beautiful and model house is great and it is desirable that they should be done, but the need ~~xfxxxxxxxxxx~~ of a decent two-room house is even greater and it is the nucleus from which the ambitious and energetic can spread.

She tells of an interesting development near Messina. After the earthquake the hundreds that had lost everything were put into barracks outside the town. Here they lived without

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sanitation, without water. The thing became impossible. The government has ~~torn down all this~~ generally torn and put in the place decent small quarters providing water and sanitation and general deceny. She has a friend who lives in one of these places and says it is ~~both~~ comfortable. They are making something attractive out of the community.

This would be worth looking into.

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Notes Housing (1)

One of the really significant developments in the five years just closing in which industry has been under such a cloud of disapproval is the steady way in which it has been attempting to meet a long ambition of this country, ~~and that in the ambition of this country~~ While it was having to meet the much needed and entirely just reconstruction which was needed to bring it into a higher complete adjustment to the factors which go into the making up of an industry, the public which furnishes its money, the labor body which carries out certain elements of the public, that is while there was an attempt to get a larger degree of coordination between a central element, to get some kind of set-up which would not prevent the manipulations of the Godless, those who really make industry possible in this higher form of service to people were steadily on their job devising, sometime useless projects ~~as~~ we will admit, but attempting to work out a great ideal, a unit in the security of people, to bring that unit within the reach of the lowliest. What they have been after is a cheap house.

It is an old story, the difficulty of getting a home which is not too expensive for the purse. Anybody can find delightful houses into which any reasonable person might like to live for $10,000. You even have tidy little homes for $5000. or $6000.00 but the $1000 house which has been set up in the industrial heaven in the last five years to work for - how get it?

And why should industry use it as a problem, isn't a house the matter of lumber and carpenters and plumbers? Ah, there

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But what good is that to me if I am a wage worker on $2000 a year and want a home? This beautiful house wrapped in celophane in its cheapest form costs $3600.00 and I must begin with a $1000.00 house because remember I must buy my land.

A Now see the situation in which thousands of people are placed in this country. They live in or near industrial towns; they want a home; they eat up their substance in houses which at their best in a great city like New York the cheapest is $5.00 a room and I want three rooms and a bath. And I am paying the rent and I am not insuring my business, moreover I have no piece of land on which to grow a rose, raise my salad and a few potatoes to put away for the winter. Is there nothing for me? That is the great cry that goes up from the voices of tens of thousands of hard working men and women in this country - no home for me. But if you could get a $1000.00 house, if you could get your piece of land for $200.00 or $300.00.

B see C

Let us look at what seems to me is perhaps the most hopeful experiment - I shall not call it more than an experiment now. And that is the effort to make a house of rolled steel. In these past years since the war one industry has been getting such a black eye for its sins; one among many amazing contributions it has made to the future welfare of all the people is to prove that steel can be produced in sheets of almost any thickness and in any size by a continuous process which in itself is one of the most marvelous and thrilling things that I have seen in many a day.

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This is no place to tell the story of the years of effort and the millions of dollars that it has taken to prove that it was possible to produce steel of the highest quality in plates of any size which could be used for the common purposes of life.

This process of making steel has been done and it has been done for the advantage of all; it is one of the great developments that makes the cheap refrigerator possible, for your refrigerator is cut to specifications, as far as size goes, and starting in in a sheet comes out boxed on an endless chain. That is what has been involved by this much discredited industry for the accommodation of us poor folks who have to look several times before we can even have a cheap refrigerator. But we know can find one, but without that process of steel making it would be impossible to get them at present prices.

Let us talk of this benefaction. If in its restless search under the highest competitive conditions, not to outdue rivals but to really give the public something it needs and wants, it can't live unless it does that; and in the case of the great steel concerns working on this process they have done just that.

And now can this great advance be used for housing ?

Well, not long ago I went to see the continuous process in the great plant at Middletown, Ohio where it was first worked out at an expenditure of millions of dollars and years of experimentation, sometimes heartbreaking. You can't believe it to see rolled into an assembly room the sides of a house in these thin steel plates, see them fitted together - an outside and an inside wall - see the opening between packed with an insulating

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fabric which insures protection in summer and in winter - a cool and a warm steel house.

Can they do it for $1000.00? That is their slogan. They are not house builders; they are makers of steel, and they are also creative salesmen and it is one of the highest types of creative salesmanship that I have seen for a long time.- this possible steel house. They have it down now to $1350.00 I believe. (See Article)

The steel house has rivals.

Years ago Grosvenor Atterbury worked with a cement house. (See Ideals in Business - See Atterbury)

Fabricated houses of one kind or another go on. There is the cheap houses in mailing catalogues. One difficulty that the houses are faced with is the high cost of plumbing - the monopolistic hold that carpenters and plumbers have. Now, the steel house breaks down the carpenter's hold. He'll have to adapt himself to its needs and demands and we may say if he complains he has brought it on himself.

As for the plumber. How can creative industry free the great mass of hard working people in this country from the hold that the aristocracy, so called, material aristocracy of the plutocracy of labor has on them for this is one of the things quite as definitely as the capitalistic character of finance, of corporations, that make things too dear for the great mass of laboring people.

There is the mistake, of course, and that can be in all factors in industry, financial, organizing, the creative engineer and laboratory experiments, the man at the desk and the man at the machine. These various factors which we so rarely

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recognize in our obsession that there are only two things connected in an industry - the man who handles the money and the man who works at the machine.

They have stolen the stage, and we may say they are the pasts of a leading part - there would be no play without these other essential elements. All of these factors recognize that they must work in collaboration and if they are to be successful their aim must be to give to the great public, not the little public the great public, that which it needs for a stabile and decent life. And one of the most essential factors for that is what we will call the $1000.00 house.

Now, this cheap house is necessary to carry out our dream for the secure and happy old age. It is necessary in another knotty problem in the economy of our present United States and that problem is that of unemployment. Old age pensions are administered generally on the basis of food, clothing, shelter. The shelter you can get is a mighty cheap one - $10.00 a month as a rule. Rent has been one of the tremendous factors in adjusting relief to the unemployed. That is, in this problem of old age insurance, as well as the problem of unemployed insurance, the possibility of a home is one of the eseential factors in the problem. Can we do it?

The problem has been prettily placed by industry itself. (See Murray Plan) An attempt to get a practical plan for giving the opportunity to the man of low wage, cheap homes which would be secure to him through the ups and downs of unemployment and that would be a home, a home which must meet his purse. In industry you have not steady employment and we have not yet learned to give - the relation

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of the ground, workmen's substance, also that very essential thing which is often overlooked the relation to that home for an existing market for his employment.

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Security:

Now about this housing matter - a house, a home is an essential element, but if it is to have the real value in the security program it must be yours. This sense of its being mine - my home - is like the squirrel's nest. I uprooted a squirrel from a garret of a little house in the country. He and his family had lived there, I think, for several squirrel generations to the despair of blankets and feather pillows in our absence. And all this fall I have had the heartache of watching that squirrel ~~in~~ investigating ~~miserable~~ entrances working like a dog at a root trying to get out, to replace possible weak places in the foundation./ He'll make it yet. I am determined it will not be with my help. How he must feel - it is his house - he must feel as I would if I were evicted after a life long residence or if the mortgage was foreclosed and I was put on the street. I have evicted the squirrel and I know how he feels. I shall never quite get over my sense of wrong doing.

It should be your home and that is the greatest problem that we have. Housing which does not give an opportunity to a tenant to own his apartment, if it be an apartment, or to own his house, does not meet all the human needs. The electric ~~imitation~~ and wash tubs,/refrigerators, are not matters of the heart like your own place.

And then there is this element of supervision. You give a spick and span perfect house or apartment to one who has lived in the clutter and crowd that all the blue prints so detest, feel so anti-social - what do you do? You have to teach people how to live in them. In teaching them you have to root up old ways; they might grow out of those old ways if you let

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them alone. You invade something more precious than cleanliness even if it is the first laws of order - you take away the right to run your place as you want to. How is it we never learn from experience? There was Pullman.

In your surroundings you must learn to live in them. (Story about DeWolfe's million dollar furnishings - the Youngstown couple)

One of the great human cries is "let us alone." In making over the physical aspects of society there is not enough consideration that these rooted things in us, are things so important to the real human beings and of society. We do not learn that society is not made according to a human plan, to develop according to the original laws of the universe. That it is understanding them and considering them that we get our results.

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Pictorial Notes: Housing

At the Armco plant I received my first hint at a solution of what I have always regarded the real housing problem in this country and that is to furnish a sanitary, warm, durable house for little money. Mr. Murray said, "What we are working towards is a thousand dollar house. We expect to do it."

While they all claimed that was what they were working for they so far do no better, I think, then $1500 or $2000. This is all tied all up with the continuous process of rolling steel plates, for these cheap houses are to be made of steel the walls are double - a two and a half space between - filled with insulating material. And they contend that that two and a half inches is as good a protection from cold and heat as a two and a half brick wall.

One thing that holds up the decent cheap house - they must have a bathroom of course - is the plumbers' union, better the plumbers' monopoly. Their control of prices, both for the wages and materials, is such that they fight any effort to produce cheap bathrooms, though Murray contends that it is possible to produce for $100.00 or less a tub, seat and bowl with pipes which any handy man can install, but to produce that would create a strike among the plumbers which might rip up an industry.

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That is, one thing that is holding back the most needed element in the problem of security/subsistence homes is the plumber labor trust. I do not know how Sears Roebuck get around this, but they do in a way. The matter of/cheaper homes - the circulation of those working in this direction is interesting.

Representatives of all the magazines, up to some forty, were in Mansfield the night before I was to look at the home of the future and representatives of Sears Roebuck came to Middletown the night I left to look at the steel structure and see its relation.

It is understood that Armco does not go into house building - that would create a row, but it will be satisfied if it can make plates which make the cheap house possible. What it is working on now is one of those illustrations of creative salesmanship. They prove the house can be done, then they let you build it, and private individuals were there looking at their plans. Already an order for a $30,000 house had been taken by a builder, and his client, an architect I think, was looking at the plate.

That is, when Armco spent $5,000,000 and several years of time and anxiety to develop a continuous process of rolling steel it went a long way to making it possible to build cheap houses, it also made possible the cheap refrigerator.

TVA. is going to give cheap current to the Valley. It should be remembered the years of experiment and work that made the current worthwhile, not only produced that current but given the conveniences that make it worthwhile for the

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people in the Tennessess Valley to have the current. Consider what it has cost in brains and money to make a cheap refrigerator; consider what it has cost to make an electric iron and to be able to turn it out by a continuous process. Nobody thinks of these things when they talk about this cheap current, only the people which drive politicians to hear from Congress. A public management of utilities has still to show that they can give cheap current as private utilities have.

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