

ON PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC SPIRIT
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Someone once said that architecture is nothing less than the spirit of a people, thrust into space. I believe there is a truth to that. By looking at our architecture, we can see ourselves for what we are. And for that reason, I also believe it is necessary to make sure our public buildings symbolize the best that is in us, and not the worst, or the merely mediocre.

Consider, if you will, how people flock to see the buildings of the past. Here in Winston-Salem, people come from all over the country to see Old Salem. And I would bet not one in a thousand of them is an architect, or

even a person whose hobby is architecture.

Most of the people who come to Old Salem are not even looking for architecture. They are trying to make contact with our roots as Americans. They are trying to visualize how their forefathers lived. They are trying to capture the spirit, and the presence, of people now long dead, who pioneered the kind of life we have today. The visitors to Old Salem can envision the way things were, the way people were, by looking at even the most commonplace buildings the early Moravians left behind.

In the twentieth century, here in Winston-Salem, the Reynolds building was a monument to North Carolina's industrial growth. It stood above everything else, and

could be seen from most hilltops in Forsyth and the surrounding counties. ^{Now} It is overshadowed by taller and more modern office buildings, but it still stands as the expression of a people and of an age. And a hundred years from now it will be as much a remembrance of us as those houses and churches down in Old Salem are remembrances of earlier people.

Now, there are those who say we should build no public building which is in any way a monument. They argue the public's money should not be spent on anything nice, or expressive, or even architecturally interesting. When we built the Legislative Building in Raleigh, people claimed we were building the Taj Mahal, and denounced it

as a waste of the taxpayers' money. But it would have been a real waste of money to build some mediocre thing that would not stand the test of time. Every year, thousands of schoolchildren and their parents come to Raleigh to see our government center there. And I think they are proud to see an expression of our spirit as a people, and not some utilitarian shoebox.

Good quality public buildings are one way in which we as a people show respect for our democracy. Good public architecture shows our respect for ourselves, as the final authority in government. We erect no monuments to kings and dictators here. When we dedicate a government building, we dedicate it to no one but ourselves.

I am glad to see a new federal building opened here in Winston-Salem, even though I am very concerned about federal spending. But not all spending is wasteful, and it is good to see some of our tax money returning to the state.

But I feel the people are going to demand more of a return from their federal government. They have gotten fed up with the centralization of authority in Washington, and I can tell you even some of the liberal Senators up there are pulling in their horns some, so keen is the pressure from home.

A few years ago, there would be plenty of people who would see this new Federal Building as the outpost of an occupation army. But I look on it now with different eyes. I think there is reason to hope this negative relationship between the people and their government is going to change. I think the people are going to keep up the pressure for reform in Washinton, until they make the government their servants, and not their masters.

If that pressure is kept up, we are going to see some meaningful changes in attitudes in the federal government.

And then this new building will be looked upon, by the people here in Winston-Salem and Northwest North Carolina, as a place to get service, not a hassle.

We built this Federal Building for ourselves.

In it, we will have a "branch office" of the kind of government we deserve -- either one which rides us, or one we ride. The choice is ours, and I think we will chose the better of the two, even if it takes a while to make our choice become a fact of life.

But when we do, we will not look upon this building as the nearest outpost of the enemy. We shall look upon it as nothing more than the marketplace of good government, and a monument to no power but our own.