

PUBLIC REVENUE EDUCATION COUNCIL

EDUCATIONAL • NON-POLITICAL • NON-PROFIT / RM. 339 / 906 OLIVE ST. / ST. LOUIS, MO. 63101 / 314 • 421-54

December 4, 1980

Mr. Perry I. Prentice, President Emeritus
ROBERT SCHALKENBACH FOUNDATION
C/O 220 Bellevue Blvd.
Belleair, Florida 33516

"A PROPOSAL TO GET THE CITY OF ST. LOUIS
GOING AGAIN"

By Perry I. Prentice, July 22, 1971

Dear Perry:

How good to hear from you again! Thanks a million! And thanks, too, for your acknowledgement of my November 21 letter about the Railway Exchange Building, here. It's great that we were able to locate the building you were seeking. I have an idea you're "cooking up" something about that building, and I'll be interested in what you come up with.

As to your talk here before the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce, at Noah Alper's instigation, back in 1971, you certainly were "right on" -- in fact, you can chuckle in great glee, sit back, and tell the officials up here, in loud and sonorous tones, "I TOLD YOU SO!". Just about everything you predicted for St. Louis, back then, has come about. Talk about being a whiz of a Psychic, you certainly win first prize.

Attached are several copies of your talk, which our Council had reprinted when you gave it. We have several hundred more copies, so if you need some more, just holler, and we'll send them along. I can't tell if the text you sent me is the original (it looks like it is), but since I feel it really is the original document, I'm returning it to you, along with the reprint copies.

Note, Perry, the blocked-in 5 statements at the top of the reprint. Rather than try to answer all your points in the entire speech, I'll respond by commenting on the top 5 statements of the reprint, as follows:

1. I don't know if any other cities in the Country are losing population faster than St. Louis, but our town certainly is one of the unfortunate "leaders" in this regard. Since the 1970 census, St. Louis has lost an estimated 40,000 people to outlying areas! When I was a youngster, St. Louis boasted 850,000 people -- and was a clean, neat and "sharp" city. According to the "official" U.S. census this year, our total population, within the city limits, is now something like 425,000! At the same time, the outlying county, and other adjacent areas have picked up the same or greater number. Overall, the State of Missouri has lost sufficient population so that our State will be entitled to one less representative in Congress, after the next redistricting is accomplished. And do you know

Mr. Perry I. Prentice

(2)

What specific local area will lose that representative? You guessed it -- the City of St. Louis!

2. There's been a continuing loss of industrial plants from the City of St. Louis since you gave your talk, back in 1971. Not the least of these is the huge General Motors assembly plant, in North St. Louis, on Union Blvd., which, while still in operation at this moment, is already building a new plant some 40 miles west of St. Louis, at Wentzville, Missouri. This big present (but soon-to-be absent) G.M. plant must employ over 10 - 15,000 people. How many of them will have jobs when the new facility opens up at Wentzville (a couple of years from now) is anybody's guess. Those who continue with G.M. after the move will, of course, have to commute over 80 miles every day, unless they choose to re-locate their homes in the Wentzville area.

3. You're right on this one also. There have been no new buildings erected in downtown St. Louis during the past decade, other than about 5 or so, all of which have gone up with some subsidies from the government, of one kind or another, including tax abatement "deals" for 10, 20 or 25 year periods. The other day I took some slide pictures down here, from right alongside our relatively new Convention Center. Facing south, I captured a good part of the St. Louis skyline, with its sizable buildings. Then I stood in exactly the same spot, and turned around, 180 degrees, and photographed the scene looking north -- a vast expanse of some 20 or 30 full square blocks, covered with -- NOTHING! That's right. The single exception is the 100-plus year-old St. Joseph's Church -- standing all alone in the midst of that desolate area -- that Church property being tax-free, of course. The reason for my taking the slides is to continue with my Site Value Taxation slide series, and to use these within its framework.

4. Where there are still buildings standing, around the fringes of the vast vacant area, those buildings, mostly slum houses, and other dwellings in various stages of deterioration and disrepair, many of them with broken windows, four-letter word graffiti on the walls, and with a lot of windows and doorways boarded up.

5. In our central City, the tax-eaters really are -- continually -- replacing the tax-payers.

When I can do so, I'm going to send a barrage of letters, and maybe some phone calls, to Mayor James Conway, of St. Louis, and try to get an appointment with him, to go over your printed text and tell him "Perry Prentice predicted exactly this, back in 1971!". Incidentally, I've met John Poelker (whom you mention in your talk, as the then-Comptroller of St. Louis) -- and actually worked with his sister, Marie, during my 40-plus years at Mallinckrodt Chemical Company here. Maybe through him, I can get an audience with Mayor Conway.

Thanks again for the great input, Perry. As you think of more things, send them along. And, as I make any progress here, I'll "tune you in" on it. Should you get up here sometime, let me know in advance, so we can arrange to get together.

Best of everything to you and yours.

Cordially and sincerely,

cc. Oscar Johansen

Allen Lubin

Mark Sullivan, Sec'y, CGO

Stanley A. Frederiksen,
Executive Director