

# American Farm Bureau Federation

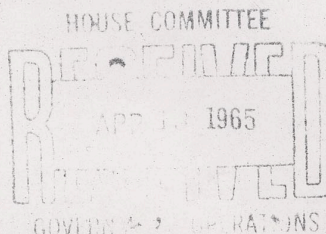
April 12, 1965



WASHINGTON OFFICE  
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CABLE ADDRESS: AMFARMBUR

Honorable William L. Dawson, Chairman  
House Committee on Government Operations  
House Office Building  
Washington, D. C.



Dear Congressman Dawson:

It will be appreciated if you will include this letter in the hearing record on bills to establish a Department of Housing and Urban Development.

From time to time in recent years support has developed for the creation of various new Departments - a Department of Transportation, of Natural Resources, of Veterans Affairs, of Science and Technology, of Education. We do not see anything in the present proposal, i.e., H.R. 6927, which indicates any more reason for a new Department of Housing and Urban Development than for the creation of other Departments suggested above.

The implication involved in the proposal for the new Department is however of major concern to us.

The implication is that the federal government is going to perform a much larger role in the future than it has in the past with respect to what appears to us to be primarily a private and a local responsibility - the planning and development of municipalities and the financing of such development.

We are impelled to this conclusion in part by reading "The Urban Complex," by HHFA Administrator, Robert C. Weaver. Mr. Weaver sets forth a comprehensive program of federal responsibility for urban development most concisely capsuled by this quotation at page 6.

"Originally this nation was developed largely by offering people absolute control over wide areas to facilitate the rapid improvement of the land. Now we are trying to recover control of the way land is used so as to achieve a proper type of development of our urban areas and of our whole country... Thus we seek to recapture control of the use of land, most of which the government has already given to the people."

The implication that the federal government is intended to take on an expanded and primary responsibility for local planning is indeed borne out by the new housing bill, H.R. 5840.

We recognize that H.R. 5840 is in the jurisdiction of another Committee. But H.R. 5840 and H.R. 6927 are companion measures. H.R. 5840 takes giant strides to expand federal authority for urban development. H.R. 6927 supposedly gives this expanded federal function improved status by creating a new Department to administer the function.

Honorable William L. Dawson, Chairman

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A cursory review of the new housing bill will indicate the major expansion of federal control of the development of urban areas proposed therein.

We see no justification for the proposal that all taxpayers should subsidize housing for middle income families by rent or purchase payment supplements.

We are concerned with respect to the proposal that taxpayers should finance individual family public housing units interspersed in non-public housing areas.

We are appalled with respect to the variety and scope of programs contained in the Housing bill.

We doubt that there is general public understanding of the size of future spending commitments established by the bill, so complex and varied in scope that it would take far more analysis than we have been able to make to understand the full extent of such future commitments.

We believe the authority delegated to the Administrator to enter into 40 year commitments for rent supplements free of congressional appropriations control is an undesirable fiscal practice.

We are concerned with respect to the extraordinarily broad powers delegated to the Administrator which would permit him, if so inclined, to distribute benefits on a favored or political basis.

We are opposed in principle to the concept of federal control of housing and urban development that permeates every section of the complex housing bill.

It seems probable that if H.R. 6927 is enacted - and a new Department created - city and other local officials would come to look upon the Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development as their major advocate for an expansion in federal responsibility and expenditures for municipal purposes and programs.

The Secretary of the new Department would appear to become in effect "Mr. Mayor" of all the municipalities in the United States. He would assume a major responsibility for their development. Local officials could be expected to lay their problems before him, and he could be expected to seek legislation to more fully satisfy their needs.

We do not believe that federal "leadership" in the planning and development of cities is likely to result in greater progress toward the solution of such problems.

Federal grants originate in the same taxpayers' pockets as state and local money. Most of the nation's tax base is within the boundaries of municipal areas. No real purpose is accomplished by federal levies on this tax base which are then distributed by federal agencies back to the sources from which such funds came. But in the process federal controls are imposed.

The Housing and Departmental proposals would involve the federal government in an ever-growing number of direct relationships with local units of government - bypassing the state governments which have created them. This subordination of state authority constitutes a major change in our political system and in our view violates constitutional purpose.

Honorable William L. Dawson, Chairman

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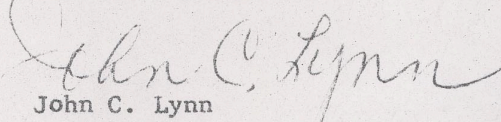
It has been suggested that the new Department is necessary to coordinate the relationships between the federal government and the cities. It appears this is an unrealistic objective. Executive Departments have historically been unsuccessful in coordinating the programs of other Executive Departments. And virtually every one of the present Executive Departments have programs which affect or involve city governments. It is not likely such other Departments are going to submit to being "coordinated" by the new Department.

It is, in fact, unrealistic to assume that certain functions of the federal government are peculiarly of an urban nature and others are not. If all activities of federal agencies which affect cities were transferred to the new proposed Department, the structure of other Executive Departments would be skeletonized.

The argument advanced that urban interests should have an adequate voice in the highest councils of government, seems to us to have little merit. Virtually everyone in the high councils of government comes from cities and is involved with the administration of programs affecting cities.

For these reasons we believe the proposal to create a new Department of Housing and Urban Affairs is not a desirable measure.

Sincerely yours,



John C. Lynn  
Legislative Director