JeS© to the NEWS

by PHYLLIS SCHLA.FLY
Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

RELEASE: September 24

HIGHWAY FREEZE & AIRPORT MOVE

The st. Louis metropolitan area has had two stunning examples of how Federal bureaucrats a thousand miles away make unfair and disruptive decisions that cause irreparable economic harm to hundreds of thousands of people.

On July I, 1968 the Federal Government arbitrarily and illegally imposed a freeze on all Federal highway funds going to Madison and St. Clair counties because of alleged race discrimination in East St. Louis. These are the two heavily-populated Illinois counties across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. The freeze itself was a blatant act of Federal discrimination because, out of the 3,095 counties in the United States, these are the only two that ever had their highway funds frozen.

This highway freeze was imposed in direct violation of at least five specific provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The law re quires notice to be given, a hearing to be held, an express finding to be made based on the evidence, a written report to be filed with Senate and House committees, and approval of the freeze by the President. None of these requirements was ever complied with.

The law also prohibits the cutoff of Federal funds "except where a primary objective of the Federal financial assistance is to provide employment." The primary objective of Federal and state highway programs is not to provide employment but to build roads.

The highway freeze remained in full force for nearly three years. During that time, the residents of those two counties paid $51 million in Federal and state highway taxes for which they received nothing.

(more)

As a result of a taxpayers' suit,. the freeze was fi11al.ly partially lif•ted, but there was no x;estitution for the lost highway•. The economic loss is incalculable. Major companies which had planned to build in those counties located elsewhere because of lack of highway connections.

This month we had another arbitrary decision by a Federal bureau crat. Secretary of Transportation William Coleman, Jr., announced his decision to buy land in Waterloo, Illinois, and move the St. Louis, Missouri airport there. Missouri Senators Eagleton and Symington have filed suit to enjoin the purchase of this land

There is no need for a new airport. Ninety percent of the users of the st. Louis airport are Missourians who want to keep the airport in its present location. The proposed site would require them to travel inconveniently a long distance across the entire city, through urban traffic and high crime areas. Even the people in Waterloo are opposed to the plan. Coleman admits that be never even inspected the area before he macle •.!tis decision.

In addition to the vast cost of a new airport, it would require an entire new network of roads and bridges. Within days of the decision, St. Louis began to feel the adverse economic effects. Ozark Airlines, which has its national headquarters in St. Louis, announced it may not build a proposed i5 million expansion there.

Coleman• s decision is so economically w1s9und and socially undesirable says it can be interpreted as that the St. Leuis •Globe-Democrat / " a political reward. He delayed his decision for months beyond the deadline and until after t.he Republi can National Convention. In Y...ansas City, Illinois Delegates voted for Ford whereas Missouri Delegates voted for Reagan.

These cases illustrate the high costs and disruptions when vast powers to decide local questions are given to Washington bureaucrats who do not have to live with the results of their decisions.

(end)