

Why is Langdon home gone from city scene?

By BOB CLARK
Editor of the Editorial Page



"Dear Mr. Editor, I would like to know why they tore down the Jervis Langdon house on Main Street and Church Street. The Langdon Plaza is something stupid to put in its place. The Langdon house could have been a very good touring place."

So writes Martha Roberts of 67 Larchmont Road. The question posed by the 11-year-old Hendy Ave. fifth grader has been raised regularly in the 37 years since the mansion was razed. Her opinions parallel those of people many years her senior.

As the years have passed, we El-

mians have become acutely aware of the loss of the stately house owned by Mark Twain's in-laws.

As we travel, we see what other communities have done in enshrining their past. These communities have done so with mixed motives. They want to preserve vestiges of the past for sentiment's sake and the education and amusement of their children and grandchildren.

They also know that these are hot tourist attractions. It's not only the "big" places like Mount Vernon and Williamsburg that attract the tourists — and their dollars. A community is fortunate if it has a place that represents the past of the area in either original or replica form.

Elmira can well boast of the Chemung County Historical Museum on William St. and Mark Twain's study on the Elmira College campus. But most people would like something bigger to point to — and thus we mourn the Langdon mansion.

If the mansion had become available for purchase by the city at a reasonable price in the 1970s rather than in 1939, the community probably would have responded to the challenge. (Witness the campaign now in progress to save the Elmira Theater on State St. when the arterial is constructed and convert it into a Performing Arts Center.)

It would be difficult to recreate the situation — and the attitudes of those involved, including the tax-paying public — of Elmira 37 years ago.

The best source for Martha Roberts or others to get answers is an article in the September 1970 edition of the Chemung Historical Journal. It was written by George H. Winner, the Elmira lawyer who

was assistant corporation counsel (city attorney) when the question whether to buy the mansion was before the public.

To summarize what Winner presented in a most extensive — and interesting — fashion:

As 1939 dawned, Jervis Langdon offered to sell the family home to the city for its assessed value of \$51,300. He later reduced the price to \$50,000 and finally to \$47,500.

What a steal, we comment today. We tend to forget what wages were in those days, if you were lucky enough to be working (remember the Depression was just beginning to wane).

Mayor J. Maxwell Beers, City Manager Ralph D. Klebes and members of the City Council were kindly disposed to buying the property. But they were getting all kinds of conflicting advice. Some people said, buy it; others questioned whether the city could afford what they labeled a "white elephant."

The Star-Gazette carried a

coupon for six consecutive days to help council members in their dilemma. It asked the people if they wanted the city to buy the property for civic purposes.

City taxpayers submitting ballots "voted" 230 to 110 against the purchase.

At no time did Langdon identify what use the property might be put to if sold. He only said he had two commercial offers. The property was already zoned for business use.

It can't be claimed that the issue held a commanding interest in the public's mind that year. Elmians voted on Daylight Saving Time the same year — and those totals were 4,053 for, 3,131 against.

Mayor Beers suggested that some civic groups buy the Langdon property and deed it to the city. None responded.

A committee organized to promote city acquisition of the property saw the handwriting on the wall and disbanded.

As the year closed, the property was being razed. Sorry, Martha.

HHH ploy to aid Egypt gets White House 'no'

By ROWLAND EVANS
and ROBERT NOVAK

WASHINGTON — Confidential advice from Sen. Hubert Humphrey that the Ford administration bypass Congress by arranging a commercial sale of six military transport planes to Egypt contradicts Humphrey's public campaign to give Congress new, far-reaching control over all U.S. military sales abroad.

This private advice to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger — likely not to be heeded — can be explained in only one way: Humphrey and other leaders of the pro-Israel bloc know that this country must help Egypt in its spectacular turn away from Moscow at all costs; however, they want to avoid a public vote in the matter.

Thus, the relatively insignificant sale of non-armed C-130 transports to Egypt for \$40 million (compared to annual aid to Israel running nearly 40 times that amount) is posing a deep dilemma for politicians unwilling to face fundamental changes in the Mideast.

For Humphrey, an unannounced Democratic presidential prospect, the sale to Egypt is particularly distressing. Humphrey is author of a Senate-passed bill (now in a Senate-House conference committee) that would compel the President to give Congress a chance to veto any commercial arms sale of \$25 million or more, just as Congress now can veto non-commercial sales between the U.S. and another government.

Yet, despite sponsoring this bill as part of his long battle to give Congress more control over world arms traffic, Humphrey quietly proposed that the administration handle the C-130 sale quickly as a routine commercial sale. Under existing law, that would bypass

Congress — and get Humphrey off the nasty hook of having to vote the sale up or down.

The hook would be nasty for Humphrey because if he voted for the sale, as overwhelmingly dictated by Egypt's switch away from Soviet friendship to informal alliance with the U.S., he would be exposed to embarrassing contrast with Sen. Henry M. Jackson, a leading Democratic presidential candidate.

As Israel's foremost Senate champion, Jackson is under irresistible pressure to vote against the C-130s' sale (publicly condemned by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on March 4).

Humphrey's position is not unique. Republican Sens. Clifford P. Case of New Jersey and Jacob K. Javits of New York joined him in private talks with Kissinger agents strongly recommending the commercial sales route.

But other members of Congress who have tended to see only Israel's foreign policy interest — as opposed to Arab interests and perhaps even U.S. interests — appear changing. One major reason: the effect on U.S. relations with Egypt and the Arab world if, after expelling some 14,000 Soviet advisers in 1972 and now abrogating the Egyptian-Soviet friendship treaty, President Anwar Sadat is publicly humiliated by the U.S. and thrown back on the tender mercies of Moscow.

That might well be taken by the Arabs as a final verdict that the U.S., in the face of even so dramatic a turnaround as Egypt has just completed, is unable to take a decision in the Middle East publicly opposed by the Israeli government.

It is precisely for that reason that President Ford and Kissinger are now leaning strongly away from Humphrey's proposal

to protect Congress from the C-130 hot potato.

Whereas Humphrey wants Congress relieved of any confrontation and vote, the administration now leans toward a direct collision on grounds that treating the C-130 sale as a "commercial" deal is flimflam — a way of gaining the short-term objective (sale of the C-130s) but losing the vital political point that deep changes in the Mideast demand deep changes in the U.S.

If the administration sticks to this position, a letter notifying Congress of the U.S.-Egyptian sale will be sent to the Senate and the House. Resolutions to veto the sale will be introduced, with the administration confident of victory (even if Humphrey should lead the veto fight). The fact that such a direct collision with Congress is preferred to an undercover deal tells much about the administration's future arms plans with Egypt.

Thus, to keep Egypt from crawling back to Moscow for arms aid sometime in the future, the administration intends to open an arms supply-line with Egypt — but for only a fractional tidbit of the arms now flooding Israel — starting with the C-130s.

Mideast experts feel Congress will accept such a future commitment, however high the pressures from Israel to impose an American arms ban on Castro. If that appraisal by the Ford administration is correct, it means that elected politicians may be taking a less stigmatized view of the Arabs, a change that holds more, not less, promise for the real future security of Israel and one that Humphrey might be advised to nurture instead of resist.

Harold Wilson: British Everyman who became PM



Harold Wilson

LONDON (AP) — James Harold Wilson wanted to become prime minister of Britain from the day his father posed him for a photograph in front of No. 10 Downing St. The younger Wilson was then eight years old.

On Oct. 16, 1964 — at the age of 48 — he became the youngest British prime minister of the century. Now 60, Wilson has served four terms in Britain's highest political office.

Born on March 11, 1916, in the grimy northern city of Huddersfield, he became a prizewinning scholar-

Hugh Gaitskill, for party leader. Amid cries of betrayal, Wilson was defeated overwhelmingly.

But on Gaitskill's death in February 1963, Wilson was elected and a year later led his party into power by defeating then Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home's Conservative government in a general election.

By last September, the pipesmoking Wilson had become the longest serving peacetime prime minister in this century with a total of 7½ years in the job. If he had remained in office until February 1977, he would have surpassed even Sir Winston Churchill and Herbert Asquith, wartime leaders who each served 8½ years.

Wilson's first term ran from October 1964 to 1966. Labor retained power in a general election, and his second term lasted until his surprise defeat by Edward Heath's Conservatives in June 1970.

Wilson returned to power in the March 1974 election, ousting Heath's Tories, and was reaffirmed in power by the October 1974 election.

The short, stocky Yorkshireman, whose clipped speech retains a trace of his north country origins, married Gladys Mary Baldwin in 1940 and they have two sons. Mary Wilson, a poet, has been a quiet, homeloving First Lady, who enjoys the anonymity of country life more than the whirl of political high jinks at Westminster.

Six months ago Wilson was telling friends he was thinking of retiring in a year or so.

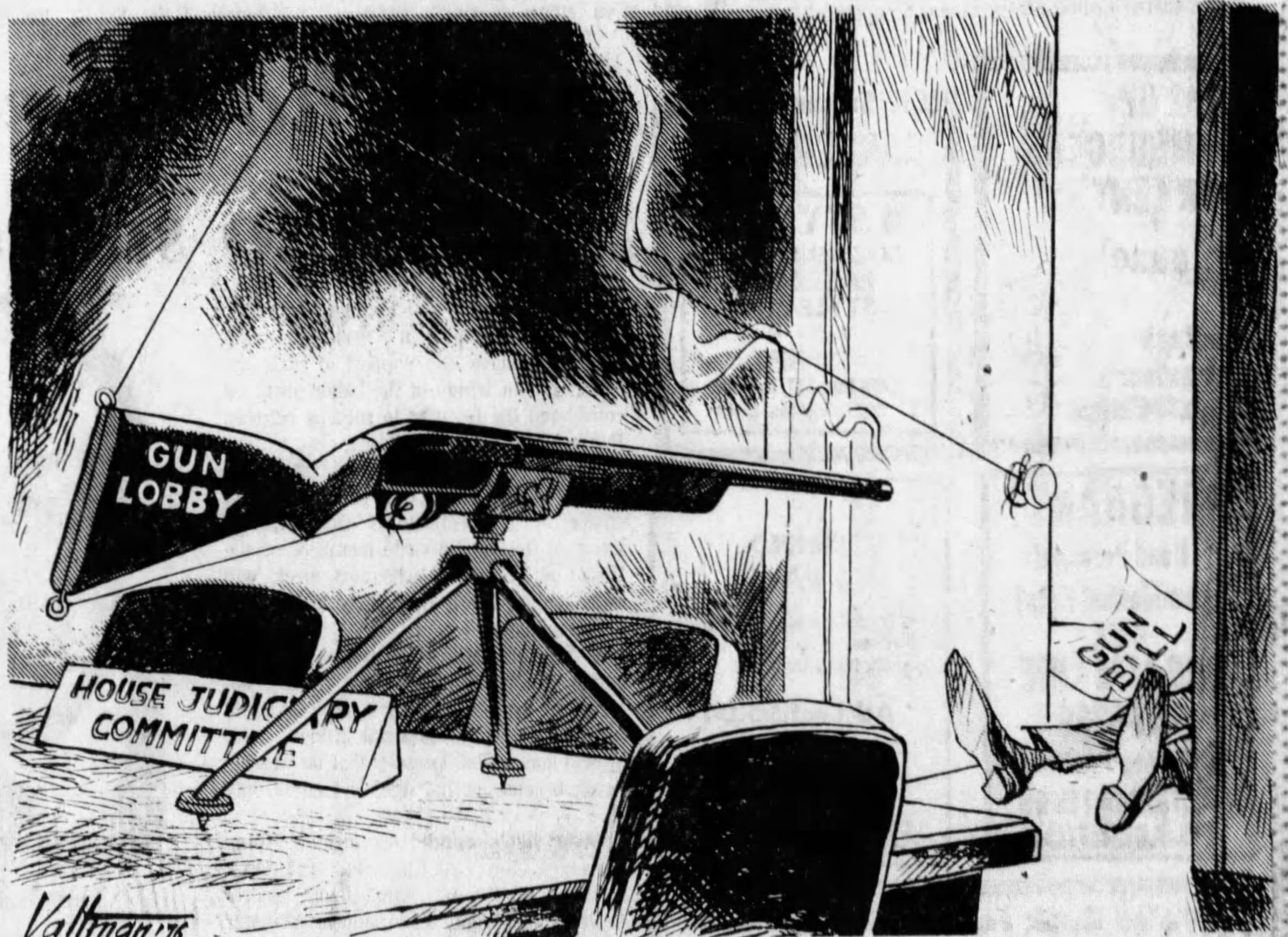
In a radio interview last week, he talked about the time when he would "cease to be prime minister." He said he would remain in the House of Commons as a "backbencher," or member without ministerial office, would do some lecturing at home and abroad, and would write books "on things I have learned."

Throughout his political life, Wilson has tried to retain the common touch. He drinks four or five pints of beer a day, a workingman's drink in Britain. He dresses plainly and foregoes the opera and ballet for the soccer stand.

His holiday home is on the Scilly Isles, off England's southwest corner, a simple abode far from the jet set world of the 1970s.

In spite of his everyman image, Wilson's government has been marked by secretive and severe infighting often unknown to the public. He has been judged a master at the political balancing act, keeping the left and right wings of his party on course.

Missing, said his critics, was a sense of where the country was going. The inspirational leadership of a Churchill was never Wilson's style.



What...throw out the TV?

By WILLIAM RASPBERRY
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — "That television has got to go," my wife said again the other night. She's been saying it now and then — and so have I, for that matter — for several months now, usually when one of the children has goofed a homework assignment or watched some garbage we have neglected to screen.

"That television has got to go," one of us would say at such times. I don't know about her, but I never really meant it.

Not that I think TV does anything very much good (except for "Sesame Street" and a few other programs from which without much assistance from us our soon-to-be-3-year-old has learned to recognize his letters and numbers).

I try to help my wife see to it that the children don't spend time in front of the TV set, that they should be spending outside playing.

But in general, I have gone on the assumption that television, if we are careful about what our children are permitted to watch, really is "chewing gum for the eyes" — not nourishing, to be sure, but not really poisonous either.

Certainly I cannot blame television for the fact that I very nearly missed "The Square Root of Soul," Adolph Caesar's deeply moving poetry reading that closed here the other night.

It had been scheduled to run another week, but the audiences were too small to keep it going. That is a shame in itself, but that's another story.

What made the evening especially rewarding for me was that so many of the poets — Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, Paul Lawrence Dunbar and other masters, white and black — evoked memories of my childhood when my mother used to read their poems to us.

Actually, I suppose she was reading them to my father and to my older sisters, since I must have been too young for that sort of thing. But I overheard anyway and, as I discovered the other night, remem-

bered more than I would have thought.

Afterward, it occurred to me that I have not read a single poem to — or around — my own children, except for nursery rhymes and things from their own little books. And for that I do blame television.

When my parents read poems and stories to us (just as when they played "20 Questions" and other such games with us) it was their primary objective not to educate us but merely to keep us entertained. It was for fun.

But television has left me no such role for my own children. What story can I read that could possibly compete for a 7-year-old's attention with the likes of "The Brady Bunch" or "Good Times" or "The Jackson Five" cartoons? Even the square Fred Rogers of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" can run circles around me in catching and holding my children's interest. And very often they even learn something useful while they watch this stuff.

Nor does it seem fair to be too restrictive on their TV time when their Dad spends so much of his own leisure time with televised sports and detective shows and news specials.

Still, after an evening of enthrallment to Adolph Caesar, I found myself resenting television more than ever and ready

(almost) to join my wife in her television-must-go crusade.

Part of my resentment, of course, is the jealousy at the discovery that this electronic interloper has come between my children and me. But a bigger part of it (I hope) is my dawning awareness that they are missing something that I have kept with me since my childhood, something that has survived generations, while in its place they watch junk that often cannot survive a 13-week season.

That may not be poison, but it certainly is very much worse than visual "chewing gum."

Right now, I'm making noises about setting strict viewing hours for the children, but I'm pretty sure that wouldn't last very long. Perhaps, I have also been telling myself, I should try to compete — try to see if I can read and play entertainingly enough so they won't remember that they are missing J.J. I'm not very confident about that either.

But something has to be done to put television back in its place — or to put me back in mine — but I confess I don't know what that something is.

I mean, you can't just throw the damned thing out. Can you?

Letters

Auxiliary backup force of citizens proposed to aid state during fiscal crisis

To the Editor:

Your headline of March 11 reads "NY's fiscal crisis nears climactic phase." So, if New York State goes bankrupt within the next few weeks, what are we citizens doing about it?

I have heard the phrases, "civil defense," "provide for common defense," "promote the general welfare" etc. over the years. It is a reality that we the people must help ourselves.

I propose that an auxiliary power of citizens be made listing a backup appointment to replace those currently in power in each town, city and county of New York State. The only requirement should be that these enlisted citizens must have (1) never earned over \$18,000 in a year and (2) have experienced the Great Depression.

The reasoning for requirement 1? So they will know how to live within the budget. For No. 2: They lived through it, knew what it was to go to bed hungry, and thus can best lead us out of the disaster.

And disaster there will be! If New York State falls, so goes a lot of others.

It is sad, very sad, that we, the people, let a lot of bigwigs (highly paid, with retirement for life) forget the purpose of

government "for the people and by the people" purely for greed of a great many "purposes of spending" and ways to spend it, when in reality it was never there, only a promise of more to come.

The next question: We have a Civil Defense, why not use it? I doubt it is geared to run a government within the state. It is a group made up to battle disasters of another type. This is why it is imperative that we people look ahead, set up our own system of survival and come out of this mess with our whole skins.

Do you realize that within a few short weeks there may be no welfare, no unemployment insurance, no schools, no jobs? It would not then be long before there would be no Social Security check either! The federal government cannot fully support a state as great as New York.

Scared? You'd better be, as it is happening right now!

HELEN (MOYLAN) McNANEY
Federal Road
Lowman

Please turn to Page 5 for more Letters to the Editor.

STAR-GAZETTE

Member of the Gannett Group

Consolidated Feb. 1, 1963, of The Elmira Star-Gazette (1907), The Elmira Advertiser (1853), The Elmira Evening Star (1888), The Elmira Gazette (1878).

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

Robert L. Collison, Publisher

Burton H. Blozor, Editor

Wayne R. Boucher, Managing Editor

Robert J. Clark, Editor of Editorial Page

Published daily except Sunday by Elmira Star-Gazette, Inc., Robert L. Collison, president, Elmira, N.Y.; Douglas H. McCorkindale, secretary; John R. Purcell, treasurer; Office: 201 Baldwin St., Elmira, N.Y. 14902. Telephone 734-5151.



Member of the Associated Press