

Bureaucratic Indignity

FROM Alex J. Duris of Hendersonville, North Carolina comes word of another threatened TVA takeover. The fight has been going on for many months, he writes. "The backer of the TVA dams have promised the land speculator that realty values would go up, and they hung tidbits on strings to lure the boat owners, campers, fishermen, real estate agents, and small fry politicians.

"There is need for some flood control work, namely blasting out shoals in the river, removing dead trees and sand bars, and dredging of channels feeding the river. Small retaining dams high in the hills at the headwaters would complete an effective flood control program. But no! Instead 6,700 acres of some of the finest valley lands will be destroyed while an additional 4,525 acres would be devoted to buffer areas, to be parceled out to the faithful workers in the ranks of the backers.

"It was originally announced that the project would cost \$82 million, then out of a clear sky it was upped to \$99 million, with no explanation for the increase."

A full page protest in The Times-News of Hendersonville opposes the law which gives power of attorney to

the Development Commission as they assume the responsibility of taking over, setting prices, and anything else they want to do with the personal property of the present owners, many of whom have occupied the same homes for as long as three generations. The property belonging to members of the Committee is to be protected from flooding while that of the long-time owners is to be lost. Speculators are sending their agents to buy property near these land sites—again to the disadvantage of the older owners. They heartily oppose paying out tax money to support a project leading to an artificially bred boom. Sound prosperity cannot be built on such indebtedness, they warn. Local, state and federal taxes will be increased and the tax dollar in Hendersonville will be reduced.

Many letters of protest have been published, though only a few have expressed agreement with the takeover. A woman writing to the editor, asked, "Isn't it ironic that our sons are on foreign soil fighting and dying to protect the lives and property of the Vietnamese people when right here a similar thing is about to happen? . . . We sometimes forget that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance."

In a letter to William S. Wait, March 2, 1839, Abraham Lincoln made one of his very few statements on taxation. "Our old revenue system, raising as it did, all the state revenue from non-resident lands . . . could no longer continue to answer the purpose of its creation," since those lands were rapidly decreasing while the wants of the treasury were increasing with the increase of population.

He urged passage of a law which he deemed "right within itself . . . because it does not increase the tax upon the 'many poor' but upon the 'wealthy few' by taxing the land that is worth \$50 or \$100 per acre, in proportion to its value, instead of, as heretofore, no more than that which was worth but \$5 per acre . . . The wealthy cannot justly complain, because the change is equitable within itself, and also a sine qua non (an essential condition) to a compliance with the Constitution."—From a letter by Howard L. Morris in the Xenia (Ohio) Gazette