

ment the purposes of the Public Buildings Act of 1959 (73 Stat. 479), by authorizing agreements and leases with respect to certain properties in the District of Columbia, for the purpose of a national visitor center, and for other purposes.

As you indicated, I have with me Mr. Loy M. Shipp, Jr., Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Space Management of our Public Buildings Service, who has been looking into the value aspects of the property in question. Also, I have with me Mr. Karel Yasko, who sat in for me many times in the subcommittee hearings which you chaired.

The purpose of the bill is to provide for a National Visitor Center to be located in the present Union Station in Washington, D.C.

The objectives of the National Visitor Center for Washington are well outlined in the act (Public Law 89-790) which created the Study Commission of which I am a member. These indicated a Center which would provide information and assistance to visitors and students coming to the Nation's Capital, facilitate their enjoyment and appreciation of the many cultural and historical features to be found here, and provide special services to visiting groups and assistance to foreign visitors, parking and local transportation.

Of the several sites investigated and studied for the Center, the Union Station offers the means for implementing such a facility in the short period required for conversion and with no capital outlay by the Government.

Among the many features of the Nation's Capital is the plan of the city based on that prepared by Pierre L'Enfant and developed by others over the years. One of these groups was the McMillan Commission, which in its plan of 1901 indicated the location of a railroad station for Washington which would eliminate the station and tracks which crossed the Mall. By relating the Union Station, which was completed in 1907, to the Capital, it dramatized the significance of the Capital to the visitor who now enters the Washington metropolitan area at over 20 million a year, about 75 percent of whom stop for some period of time. By 1970 this number is expected to reach over 24 million, and in 1980 over 35 million.

While other means of transportation have developed since the construction of the Union Station, the location of the structure still holds an important planning position in the city. Designed by Daniel Burnham, a member of the McMillan Commission, and credited with the admonition that we "make no little plans," the significance of the building has been cited by leading architects and critics. Its original function was a reception center for large numbers of visitors who reached Washington by train. As a Visitor Center it will receive, welcome, and inform greater numbers who arrive by the varied modes of today's transportation. Parking facilities for 4,000 vehicles to be provided over the tracks and north of the present concourse will permit many of the 75 percent who arrive by private automobile to store their vehicle during their stay and travel about the city by convenient public transportation. By removing these automobiles from the city's traffic, one urban problem can be eased.

We support the objectives of H.R. 12603, but believe that it would be more appropriate and effective if the role of GSA in connection with the negotiation and execution of the agreements and leases be consultative rather than as an executive agency. The bill would provide that plans for alterations of the Union Station Building shall be