

I think the people who are over at what is called Resurrection City are exercising a legitimate American right to petition for redress. I think it is also awfully important for the voice of the concerned group in Congress, like yourself, to reach out there to the Mall so that they can know that they are being heard and some of the things they are down here about are being handled.

Having said that, I will come back to my statement then.

Senator MUSKIE. Thank you very much.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify on S. 698. It is my opinion that the purposes of this bill are most important. One of the elements lacking in many programs for the public good is that of consideration of the rights and convenience of the individual.

In the statement of introduction made on January 26 by you, Mr. Chairman, and in the language of the bill, itself, one senses a desire of the chief supporter and his associates to make certain that there is a minimum of inconvenience to the individual and maximum protection of his rights while making changes that will benefit the country as a whole.

I wish to make the following comments:

1. By assuring coordination and cooperation in the use and administration of Federal grants this bill will eliminate a great deal of waste and confusion. However, it should also give assurance that the people of the country will not be forced to sell their homes just because it is possible to save a few dollars by running a highway through the homeowner's living room instead of through some part of town where the costs of land acquisition may be higher or because of arbitrary official actions.

There should also be assurance that those who want to stay in places of business or continue to live in their homes while broad programs of property improvement are underway will have a reasonable opportunity to do so.

A classic example of arbitrary selection of a highway site came to us from Montgomery, Ala., in 1966. The writer of the complaint said that a proposed highway was planned to go through one area of a community but the route was changed, and I quote from his statement: "Go right through the middle of Rev. Ralph Abernathy's parsonage."

The writer of the complaint said a highway official had told him that using that particular route "would get that preacher out of town." Fortunately, the plan was changed so that Mr. Abernathy's parsonage was not taken but other desirable homes of colored persons were taken.

I would like to offer for the record, Mr. Chairman, a telegram which came this morning from Mr. Fred Gray, who is a lawyer in Montgomery, in which he confirms the fact that the original plan would have taken Reverend Abernathy's parsonage, right through his living room. It was changed because of protest, but it still took a large number of very good homes occupied by colored people.

Senator MUSKIE. That will be included in the record.

Mr. MITCHELL. Mr. William R. Morris, director of the NAACP's housing program, has submitted these two examples of indifference to human needs in governmental action that displaces people: