

Serious Building Shortage

Manila could stand a lot of building just now, families come to live here and find no homes for rent or apartments either. There was actual distress among army families that arrived in town on the latest army transport and could procure no suitable quarters. If credit and the ambition to gain returns from property were properly coordinated now, there would be the prospect of settling many new families in town permanently. They come for army service, they come from China and other nearby points. When we built for ourselves an apartment upstairs and leased the main apartment downstairs, a notice in the newspapers brought at least a dozen applicants in two days.

None questioned the rental price, about 12% gross on the investment. At least half a dozen were ready to snap up what they evidently thought was a bargain, yet it is good return. Under these conditions, Manila could be rapidly improved with many good modern houses and apartments. The city is clearly filling up faster than these services are supplied.

Probably there is also needed a low-rate hotel in the vicinity of the port area and the clubs. Folk from China say, at least, that tourists are often deprived of a visit to Manila by the hotel rates quoted them and the prospect of finding nothing available even then. A friend down from Shanghai, to make his headquarters for the orient here instead of there, hesitated between Hongkong and Ma-

nila. Until he secured a house, he lived at the Manila Hotel at a charge about 35% to 40% higher than similar accommodations would have cost him in Hongkong. Rent he finds somewhat lower than in Shanghai, but it took a long time to locate a house to his liking.

This sums up the situation as it appears to newcomers anxious to throw in their lot with this community. Such families are not transients, they come to town to live here. Their presence here aids to the city's prosperity; if they find living conditions tolerable, perhaps even comfortable, there is no saying where the movement will end.

Manila deserves to be general oriental headquarters of a great many corporations doing business in this territory. She and the Islands give these companies no little trade one year with another, and peace and public order preside here perennially. Communications are of the best, and the city gains infinite advantage from being the western terminus of Pan American's transpacific service. China is but a short hop away, and New York within a week's time by air. Telegraph service, never delayed, never at the mercy of the government, never in the midst of civil upheavals or foreign assaults, connects with all the world.

For some time past the Journal has been saying that the city is rapidly growing away from its settled inhabitants. It would profit all of us to live up to the new opportuni-

ties the growing population, and the potentially much larger population, affords. Now is the time for the lifting of mortgages, a time for lender and landowner to get together in many instances, and by use of a little more money, to add more income value to scores of properties.

With the new Ayala bridge keeping the traffic flow constant, Sta. Mesa comes within the scope where army families may reside. This may be due to a lack of houses available in districts nearer army posts and headquarters, but just now it is a fact. In general, too, it may be said that the scope for the renting of good residences has broadened. Gradual development of the Philippine army will broaden it more. However, the place where you propose to build for the purpose of renting remains of vital importance. It is not proposed that an orgy of imprudent building be undertaken, but for prudent building there certainly is much room.

The condition is remarked with emphasis because it is believed it will continue indefinitely. Manila is destined to shelter a million inhabitants within a decade.

If an organization is needed to cope with the situation, one should be formed.

Proofs are on every hand. Attend the movies, are they not crowded both upstairs and down? Yet two new downtown theaters are recent acquisitions, each with about 1100 seats. Altogether there are five large airconditioned downtown theaters using first-run pictures; first shows are at 10 a. m. and last ones at 9 p. m., seven days a week, but the public can not be accommodated whenever the pictures are passably good. Folk are actually beginning to stay at home from pictures, being unwilling to queue up for them in this climate.



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The condition is recent, but now constant; it reveals the city's growth.

Instance the run of *One Hundred Men and a Girl* at the new Lyric, where on Sunday, October 31, it grossed the biggest take the Lyric ever had in one day. When patrons telephoned inquiring for seats anywhere in the house, even every loge seat was taken. Now here is the more astonishing part. The next day was All Saints Day, with Rizal Avenue made a one-way thoroughfare for the nonce and everyone in Manila, judging from the traffic, bound to the cemeteries for the night. This chance was chosen for getting into the Lyric to hear Deanna Durbin sing and watch Stokowski conduct. Amazingly, All Saints Day was no competition—downstairs all the standing room was sold out and upstairs not six seats were to be had for the seven o'clock show; and at nine o'clock the jam was still forbidding.

Manila badly needs another large downtown theater at least, perhaps a first-rate airconditioned second-run place somewhere on Rizal Avenue this side of Azcarraga. We may return to this general subject later. It is well worth following up. Perhaps

a campaign of some sort is in order, a preliminary to which ought to be an ironclad pledge from lumber suppliers not to up prices while the movement is on. Say, in a word, a bit of social justice for the man who owns a lot and is willing to risk it for the price of a rentable house.

Buttons!

There is an American investment of about \$125,000 in fixed assets of the Philippine Button Corporation of which John L. Headington, treasurer of the Chamber of Commerce, is the vice president and manager. The investment includes premises, buildings, machinery, tools, implements and equipment. Normally 300 workmen, many of whom are skilled, are employed, and 100 women. All receive living wages, medical and dental care and necessary hospitalization. The company manufactures for its New York Sales Office, and does 2/3 of the Philippine manufacturing of pearl buttons from the shell gathered from Philippine coastal waters.

Shell used in 1936 cost ₱184,569; other expenses chiefly labor summed ₱142,331, the whole expense being ₱326,900. Shipments to the home office in 1936 summed 430,028 gross valued at ₱272,463. From 1931 to 1937 it is shown that the average invoice price per gross was 66-6/10 cents

vos, and the average diameter of the buttons 16 lines. The U. S. tariff is 1½ cents per line per gross, plus 25% ad valorem. On this company's product as now running during a typical period, what the U. S. full duty would be can be drawn from these data, also the partial duties: 5% of full in 1941, 10% in 1942, 15% in 1943, 20% in 1944, 25% in 1945, and the full duty after termination of the Commonwealth in 1946 unless intervening congressional action effects a change.

The full U. S. duty would be 72-65/100 centavos, 109% of the present total cost. Had the duty been applicable from 1931 to 1937, "we would have been compelled," says Headington, to pay ₱2,346,477 on ₱2,152,731 worth of buttons which payment would have been absolutely impossible at any time during that period." It is also cited that the buttons are made of ocean pearl exclusively, that the output is too small in the American market to raise objections from American manufacturers in the United States, and the cost too great to admit of undercutting such manufacturers even were the company disposed to do so. Headington concludes that the industry can't withstand the full U. S. duty, or the partial duties. It is apparent that this is true, and further, therefore, that remedial congressional action is advised by governing circumstances so cogently presented as to require no elucidation. Meaning nothing to the United States, it is nevertheless important to the Philippines that such an industry be exempted from the annihilatory provisions of the Tydings-McDuffie act.

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