

The Bus Terminals Proposal

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SINCE the plan to establish bus terminals in Manila was formally presented, there has been much comment both for and against it. This is a healthy sign, for no one interested in the plan wants to meet only with apathy in a matter of such importance.

However, some of the opposing opinion appears misinformed as to the purpose and nature of the plan. It is the writer's intention to present the matter from the point of view of the public interest.

The need for bus terminals is but a consequence of the growth of Manila. There is always opposition to any change, and a present danger lies in unnecessarily prolonging difficulties simply because of a tendency to resist change and to preserve the status quo.

One of the main arguments advanced by opponents of the plan is that the establishment of such terminals would cause extra expense to the traveling public, yet this need not necessarily be true. For instance, assuming that the price of a ticket for a trip from some outlying point to Manila is ₱1.00, this must include the cost of transporting a passenger through and to the center of Manila. A fractional amount, therefore, could be deducted from the cost of the ticket without loss on the part of the bus operator, and this amount could then be paid by the passenger to an operator holding a city franchise who conducts a shuttle-service from the terminal. If an efficient transfer system were adopted, such as is in effect in other cities of the size of Manila, this could all be made very simple and of benefit to all concerned, with the net cost to the passenger remaining the same.

Another objection which has been raised concerns the added inconvenience to the traveling public since passengers, after reaching a terminal, would have to seek a secondary means of transportation to take them to where they want to go. This difficulty, on examination, practically disappears, for the recommended sites of the terminals are not so remote as might be thought. The proposed Divisoria terminal, for example, would be within walking distance of one important general point of destination, and this would be true of most of the terminals. Furthermore, there is no possible way for any bus operator to divine the ultimate destination of the majority of his passengers. No matter where a bus finally stops, most of the passengers will go on to somewhere else. The conclusion is that some secondary means of transportation, foot

or vehicle, is necessary whether the terminal plan is put into operation or not.

Still another objection, voiced in certain quarters, is that the plan would require the employment of additional workers to handle baggage and freight, but this, if true, should not be permitted to outweigh the advantages to the public.

It is not necessary to emphasize the importance of the plan as a means of reducing the congested traffic in the city. That, of course, is the main point in its favor, but there would be other advantages, some of which may be listed as follows:

1. Value of the terminals as information centers for travelers, — information as to the local geography, hotels, restaurants, shops, etc. This would greatly lessen the present preying on innocent *provincianos*.

2. Value of the terminals in improving conditions of sanitation, — rest rooms, etc., especially for mothers and children, could be provided more conveniently than at present.

3. Value of the terminals in promoting public safety, — the inspection of busses would be facilitated, over-night parking in the streets would be eliminated, losses from theft would be reduced, the entrance and exit of persons wanted by the police could be better controlled. A great deal more of protection could be afforded the public than is now possible.

4. By establishing the bus terminals, depots, etc., in supervised areas, fire-danger would be reduced. Some operators now store gasoline in prohibited places and others operate garages which do not meet even the minimum safety standards.

5. The public would be inconvenienced by the opportunity to compare routes, schedules, fares, etc. Travelers would have the opportunity to choose what appeared to them to be the cleanest and best operated busses, and this would undoubtedly result in a general raising of operation standards.

Much more could be written on the subject, and probably will be. It is the opinion of the writer that if the matter is correctly presented, it would meet with widespread approval. Many other cities have met the same problem in this way. The plan has been successful wherever it has been put into effect, to the benefit not only of the city and the public, but of the operators.

"Collective bargaining is not a vehicle of economic warfare but a normal and necessary part of business dynamics. That it is so frequently depicted in the former aspect is largely due to the fact that much recent legislation has been based on the false assumption. Listening to many of our neo-liberals, you might picture the American economic scene as a chaotic free-for-all, with its amazing productivity a lucky and inexplicable accident!"

William A. Orton, in FORTUNE