

We can hardly suppose, nor do we believe, that the powers granted in the Ordinance of 1865, to use for this purpose half a million of bonds, ever authorized the mere beginning of a building, the ultimate cost of which was to greatly exceed the amount set apart, and beyond which they had no right to go. The sum appropriated contemplated payment in full for a finished building, not to lay the foundation and rear outer walls, merely or partially construct the edifice, but to finish it in all its detail and in every part. If any other purpose was contemplated it does not appear upon the face of the law, and the Commissioners are not at liberty to go beyond its clear requirements, nor could the Mayor and City Council grant any powers to them in the premises not previously authorized by the Legislature.

The Mayor and City Council in their powers are limited by Legislative enactments, and the Commissioners are limited by the ordinance, and neither can go beyond them. If the Commissioners appointed under the Ordinance of 1865, or the Mayor and City Council had the power to exceed the sum authorized, then they could as well have proceeded without any authority. To exceed the law is as grave an offence as to proceed without law, and to do so is so grave an offence that the seal of public condemnation should be set upon all who participate in it.

The continued increase of the debt of Baltimore City is a subject of painful anxiety to its citizens. Each returning year has brought its augmentation, until now the burthens are intolerable, and its effect must be disastrous to the prosperity of the City and to the State also. From the fear of heavy taxation, capital will shun us, personal property will hide itself, and thereby the basis of taxation will diminish while the debt increases, and thus the burthen must, and will, in the end, fall with crushing weight upon real estate.

The effect of public debt upon communities, is the same as debt upon individuals. It shuts the door of hope—dispirits and paralyzes their energies. A public debt is a public calamity that curses the living, and wastes the estate of the dead. Its enormity at this time in the several departments of our government, is a source of serious alarm to the prudent and thoughtful. So great is the debt of the Federal and State Governments, that when added to those of a local and municipal character, an army of agents and tax-gatherers, at great expense to the people, have to be maintained to gather from them the means to pay the interest, much less the principal. Every branch of industry feels the burthen; every transaction, great or small, has some burthen upon it; property is burthened; the earnings of toil, whether of body or mind, is visited; the home that shelters is taxed; the garments we wear are taxed; the bread that