

agencies together. The distribution of mail alone was a very expensive operation under the old system, to say nothing of the delays and inconveniences it entailed. The same can be said of telephone communications, which have been centralized in a single switchboard. Moreover, the State is benefitting to the extent of approximately a half million dollars a year in rentals it formerly paid for office space.

The consolidation of our activities here in this center is also a great convenience to the people, who in the past found it difficult if not impossible to learn where to go with their problems. We are better able to help the individual citizen with his problems because of the location of these buildings at the heart of our largest concentration of population.

Aside from these factors—the more efficient operation of our State government and the greater convenience to the public—I am pleased exceedingly that the State of Maryland was able to assist this great city in its laudable effort to rejuvenate its downtown business area. The city of Baltimore is, and has been, the cultural and economic heart of Maryland. The problems of the State and the city are inextricably interwoven. The health and prosperity of the one are determined by the health and prosperity of the other. If Baltimore thrives, the State of Maryland will prosper. And conversely, if Baltimore is allowed to fall into decline, the State will suffer. The State is not being altogether altruistic, therefore, when it perceives, as it has done here, a condition that requires remedying and acknowledges its own responsibility to help provide the remedy. The State is contributing to its own welfare when it assists the communities which comprise it to improve themselves. Every person in Maryland benefits when this city uproots its slums and replaces them with clean and sturdy housing. A blight upon Baltimore is a blight upon the State. We can rejoice, therefore, in seeing these buildings burgeoning in such great beauty in what only a few years ago was blighted soil. As we look around ourselves here in the section of the city, we see bright prospects for the future—evidence of rebuilding and restoration that will make the city a more pleasant place in which to live.

I am pleased, as I know all of you are, that the State of Maryland was first to purchase land and build in the area of redevelopment. To the south of us here, and near the center of the old business district, the city has a bold and visionary program for the reconstruction of its vital inner core. The leaders of this community have displayed remarkable courage and unusual foresight in planning for the construction of a new civic center and for the rehabilitation of the downtown area in the elaborate Charles Center project. We have confidence in the capacity of these leaders to bring their rejuvenation plan to fruition. In this great effort