

PART TWO

Character and Culture

INTIMATIONS OF THE FUTURE

Revival of Michigan Central Station Cracks Open Door to the New Paradigm

by Susan Kokinda

June 30—From the moment that Ford Motor Company Chairman Bill Ford, Jr. announced that Ford was buying Detroit’s most famous ruin, the derelict Michigan Central Station, something happened in the city. A wave of optimism rippled through the population and extraordinary things began to happen.

Shortly after the official June 11 confirmation that Ford had purchased the building, the Henry Ford Museum received an anonymous phone call. The caller offered to return the large clock that had hung on the outside of the 18-story station and had been stolen (or perhaps preserved) during the years that the empty station was looted and stripped. According to the *Detroit Free Press*, the caller said “Please send two men and a truck immediately. It has been missing for over 20 years and is ready to go home. Thank you so much.”

In subsequent days, further calls flooded into Ford, offering to return stolen or lost items from the train station. Architectural restorationists contacted Ford to offer help. Others offered donations. An article in the June 27 *Detroit Free Press* commented, “After all, Ford is a multibillion dollar company. And while this project is a Detroit treasure, the Dearborn-based carmaker didn’t expect people to call and offer cash.”

When the Ford Motor Company announced on June 20, that it would open the building to the public for three days, the response was so overwhelming (20,000 people registered) that a fourth day was added. This author

stood in line for two hours on a Sunday afternoon, along with thousands of other very happy people, for a chance to see the interior of the station. While the media had spent the previous week whipping up the population against President Trump over “babies being torn from their mothers’ arms,” and while those lining up to see the station clearly came from every political persuasion and every walk of life, not a single “toxic” discussion was overheard. People were reminiscing about the station, comparing notes on which of the area’s auto plants they or their parents and grandparents had worked in, and were imagining the impact the revival of the station would have in bringing thousands of new workers into the city.



postcard

The Michigan Central Station.

The Unseen Hand

Immediately after Donald Trump’s 2016 election victory, *EIR* founder Lyndon LaRouche stated that the Trump victory

was not a domestic, American political event, but rather an extension of an international process of change sweeping the world. Similarly, the response to the revival of Michigan Central, whether those who were standing in line or returning artifacts knew it or not, is part of the advance of the “New Silk Road” paradigm spearheaded by China, supported by Russia, and potentially joined by Trump’s United States.

The train station had become the most iconic symbol of the decline of the industrial heartland. Built in 1914, and designed by the same architects who designed Grand Central Station in New York City, the interior featured

marble ceilings, tiled walls, Doric columns, and a classical appreciation of curved spaces. In the decades after its opening, which coincided with the \$5 day and the development of the assembly line, Detroit's population tripled. Workers came through the doors of Michigan Central from across the country and from around the world. When World War II broke out, a new influx of workers poured through Michigan Central to man "The Arsenal of Democracy," while others shipped off to war through the station. As the post-industrial society took its toll on Michigan, the station was abandoned in 1988. The Moroun family, which purchased the building in 1996, allowed it to fall into such decay, that it became an international tourist attraction of what became known as "ruin porn."

Ford's plans for the renovated building (scheduled to be completed in 2022) include moving Ford's electric and self-driving vehicle operations into it, and leasing out the rest of it for offices, retail space, and apartments.

But something else is stirring.

As part of the ceremonies surrounding the station purchase and the public tours, Ford hung banners and projected large displays on the front of the station. The main theme was "Creating Tomorrow Together." The rotating displays showed various Detroiters reflecting on what the city needed. Most interesting, coming from an automobile company, was the following: "When I think of the future and infrastructure, it's really about having a mass transit system that's really efficient and really, really works." Another one said, "Detroiters engineer things, design things, and build things. That's not gonna go anywhere. It's not just our DNA. It's the landscape here, our infrastructure is made for this, and it's why we're still relevant and hopefully we'll always be."

'I Want a Train'

When I was in the station, looking at a small exhibit of the history of the station and the city, the lady standing next to me spontaneously blurted out, "this is a train station. We need trains." She then went on to describe all the local, regional, and national cities to which Detroit should be connected. When I commented that U.S. Representative Debbie Dingell (D) had said the same thing,



Wikimedia Commons/Albert Duce

Interior of the Michigan Central Station, now under renovation.

she said "well, that's the first thing she has ever said that I agree with." Dingell had been quoted by local *Free Press* columnist Rochelle Riley as saying, "I've already been talking to everybody [about a train] That was John Dingell's (Dingell's husband and former Congressman) dream to have this. We need a connector regionally and statewide. We need a train west to Chicago."

Riley herself wrote: "So dear Mr. Ford, as you and your team who have given so much hope to the city's oldest neighborhood, to the state's largest

city and to urban meccas everywhere, trying to get it right, we need one more thing: A train . . . I want a train."

A few days later, the Ford Motor Company announced that it would preserve the passenger tracks at the station, but stated that the question of restoring passenger service was a regional transportation issue, something that was not in the purview of Ford.

In reality, it is the purview of the nation. Only a national mission to shift the entire economic platform of the country to a higher level of energy flux density and relative potential population density from a "LaRouchian" standpoint, will fulfill the hopes now being expressed by so many. It is time to think much, much bigger than self-driving cars shuttling people from Detroit to Dearborn, or a passenger train moving at 90 miles per hour between Detroit and Chicago. Look at China's network of 20,000 miles of high-speed rail. Look at China's plans to upgrade to a network of magnetically-levitated trains. Think of the machine tool, materials, and power requirements of such a national network. Locate Detroit and the industrial Midwest in that kind of future, and one can properly conceptualize how to use a train station, and the skilled work force that will coalesce around it.

A Michigan LaRouche PAC organizer recently presented LPAC's pamphlet, "2018 Campaign to Win the Future: LaRouche's Four Laws for Economic Recovery," to a candidate for national office. When the candidate turned a page and saw a map showing the connection between Russia and North America at the Bering Strait, he pointed to the rail connection and said, "That has to go through Michigan!"

Now you are talking about a train station.