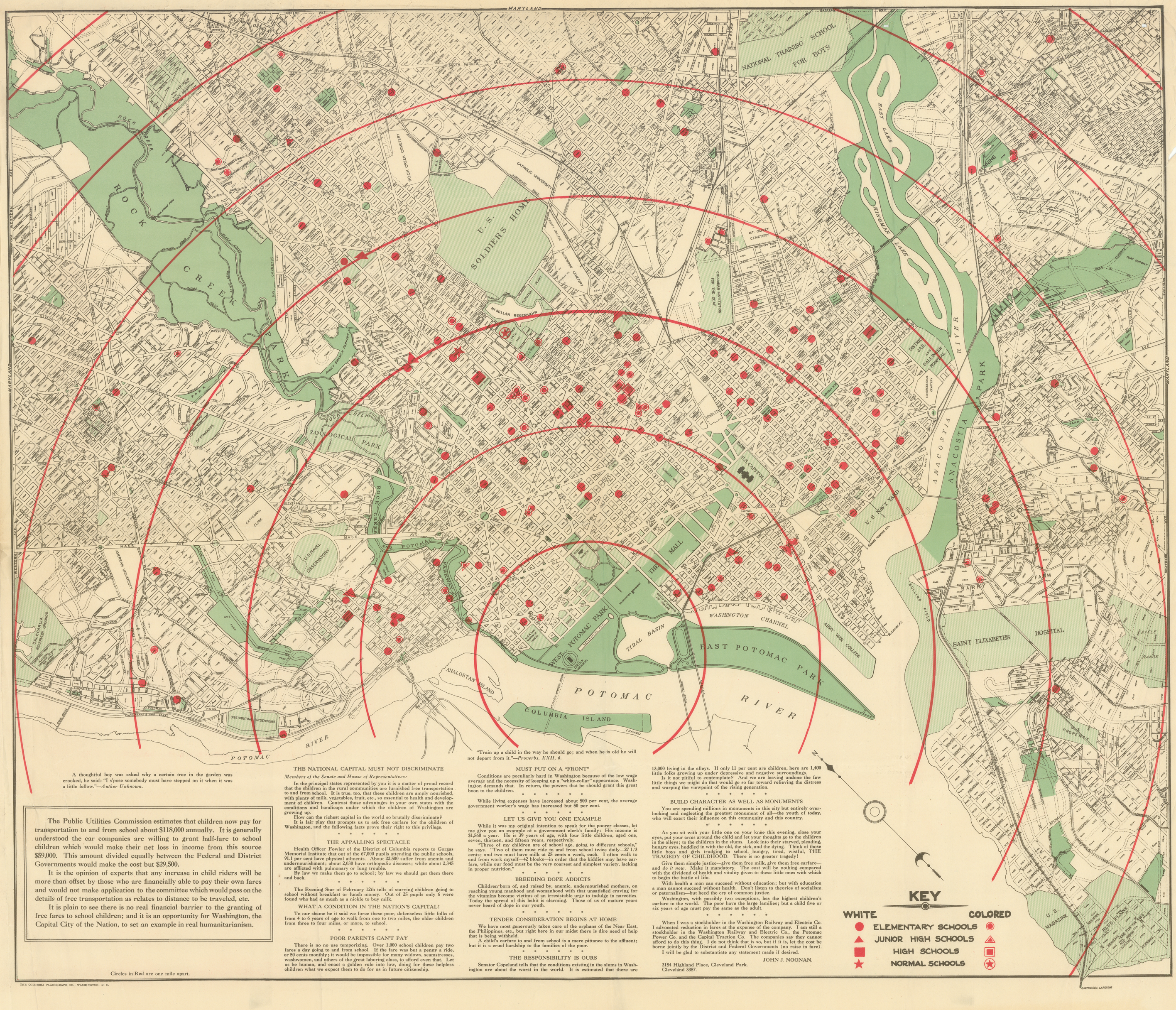

A thoughtful boy was asked why a certain tree in the garden was crooked, he said: "I s'pose somebody must have stepped on it when it was a little fellow."—*Author Unknown.*

The Public Utilities Commission estimates that children now pay for transportation to and from school about $118,000 annually. It is generally understood the car companies are willing to grant half-fare to school children which would make their net loss in income from this source $59,000. This amount divided equally between the Federal and District Governments would make the cost but $29,500.

It is the opinion of experts that any increase in child riders will be more than offset by those who are financially able to pay their own fares and would not make application to the committee which would pass on the details of free transportation as relates to distance to be traveled, etc.

It is plain to see there is no real financial barrier to the granting of free fares to school children; and it is an opportunity for Washington, the Capital City of the Nation, to set an example in real humanitarianism.

Circles in Red are one mile apart.

THE NATIONAL CAPITAL MUST NOT DISCRIMINATE

Members of the Senate and House of Representatives:

In the principal states represented by you it is a matter of proud record that the children in the rural communities are furnished free transportation to and from school. It is true, too, that these children are amply nourished, with plenty of milk, vegetables, fruit, etc., so essential to health and development of children. Contrast those advantages in your own states with the conditions and handicaps under which the children of Washington are growing up.

How can the richest capital in the world so brutally discriminate?

It is fair play that prompts us to ask free carfare for the children of Washington, and the following facts prove their right to this privilege.

* * * * *

THE APPALLING SPECTACLE

Health Officer Fowler of the District of Columbia reports to Gorgas Memorial Institute that out of the 67,000 pupils attending the public schools, 91.1 per cent have physical ailments. About 22,500 suffer from anemia and undernourishment; about 2,030 have orthopedic diseases; while about 2,345 are afflicted with pulmonary or lung trouble.

By law we make them go to school; by law we should get them there and back.

* * * * *

The Evening Star of February 12th tells of starving children going to school without breakfast or lunch money. Out of 25 pupils only 6 were found who had as much as a nickle to buy milk.

WHAT A CONDITION IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL!

To our shame be it said we force these poor, defenseless little folks of from 4 to 6 years of age to walk from one to two miles, the older children from three to four miles, or more, to school.

* * * * *

POOR PARENTS CAN'T PAY

There is no no use temporizing. Over 1,000 school children pay two fares a day going to and from school. If the fare was but a penny a ride, or 50 cents monthly; it would be impossible for many widows, seamstresses, washwomen, and others of the great laboring class, to afford even that. Let us be human, and enact a golden rule into law, doing for these helpless children what we expect them to do for us in future citizenship.

"Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old he will not depart from it."—*Proverbs, XXII, 6.*

MUST PUT ON A "FRONT"

Conditions are peculiarly hard in Washington because of the low wage average and the necessity of keeping up a "white-collar" appearance. Washington demands that. In return, the powers that be should grant this great boon to the children.

* * * * * *

While living expenses have increased about 500 per cent, the average government worker's wage has increased but 50 per cent.

* * * * *

LET US GIVE YOU ONE EXAMPLE

While it was my original intention to speak for the poorer classes, let me give you an example of a government clerk's family: His income is $1,560 a year. He is 39 years of age, with four little children, aged one, seven, thirteen, and fifteen years, respectively.

"Three of my children are of school age, going to different schools," he says. "Two of them must ride to and from school twice daily—27 1/3 cents; and two must have milk at 25 cents a week, each. I often walk to and from work myself—42 blocks—in order that the kiddies may have carfare, while our food must be the very coarsest and simplest variety, lacking in proper nutrition."

* * * * * *

BREEDING DOPE ADDICTS

Children born of, and raised by, anemic, undernourished mothers, on reaching young manhood and womanhood with that unsatisfied craving for the vitamins become victims of an irresistable urge to indulge in narcotics. Today the spread of this habit is alarming. Those of us of mature years never heard of dope in our youth.

* * * * * *

TENDER CONSIDERATION BEGINS AT HOME

We have most generously taken care of the orphans of the Near East, the Philippines, etc., but right here in our midst there is dire need of help that is being withheld.

A child's carfare to and from school is a mere pittance to the affluent; but it is a cruel hardship to the families of the poor.

* * * * *

THE RESPONSIBILITY IS OURS

Senator Copeland tells that the conditions existing in the slums in Washington are about the worst in the world. It is estimated that there are 13,000 living in the alleys. If only 11 per cent are children, here are 1,400 little folks growing up under depressive and negative surroundings.

Is it not pitiful to contemplate? And we are leaving undone the few little things we might do that would go so far toward relieving the distress and warping the viewpoint of the rising generation.

* * * * * *

BUILD CHARACTER AS WELL AS MONUMENTS

You are spending millions in monuments in this city but entirely overlooking and neglecting the greatest monument of all—the youth of today, who will exert their influence on this community and this country.

* * * * * *

As you sit with your little one on your knee this evening, close your eyes, put your arms around the child and let your thoughts go to the children in the alleys; to the children in the slums. Look into their starved, pleading, hungry eyes, huddled in with the old, the sick, and the dying. Think of those little boys and girls trudging to school, hungry, tired, wistful, THE TRAGEDY OF CHILDHOOD. There is no greater tragedy!

Give them simple justice—give them free milk, give them free carfare—and *do it now.* Make it mandatory. The cost will be nothing compared with the dividend of health and vitality given to these little ones with which to begin the battle of life.

With health a man can succeed without education; but with education a man cannot succeed without health. Don't listen to theories of socialism or paternalism—but heed the cry of common justice.

Washington, with possibly two exceptions, has the highest children's carfare in the world. The poor have the large families; but a child five or six years of age must pay the same as the adult.

* * * * * *

When I was a stockholder in the Washington Railway and Electric Co. I advocated reduction in fares at the expense of the company. I am still a stockholder in the Washington Railway and Electric Co., the Potomac Power Co. and the Capital Traction Co. The companies say they cannot afford to do this thing. I do not think that is so, but if it is, let the cost be borne jointly by the District and Federal Governments (no raise in fare).

I will be glad to substantiate any statement made if desired.

JOHN J. NOONAN.

3154 Highland Place, Cleveland Park.
Cleveland 3357.

KEY

WHITE	COLORED
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS	
JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOLS	
HIGH SCHOOLS	
NORMAL SCHOOLS	

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