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ABSTRACT OF THE

IOWA
CONFERENCE
ON
PLANNING

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IOWA STATE PLANNING BOARD

AMES, IOWA

APRIL 16, 1936

Abstract of the
IOWA CONFERENCE ON PLANNING

Ames, Iowa
Thursday, April 16, 1936

Opening Session - Chairman, Dean T. R. Agg.

DEAN AGG:

It is my pleasure to introduce at this time Dean H. H. Kildee, Chairman of the Iowa State Planning Board, who will talk to you on "The Story of the Iowa State Planning Board: Its Functions, Its Future".

DEAN KILDEE:

The Iowa State Planning Board is a non-partisan group of citizens serving without pay who are working to bring about planned progress in the conservation and development of our land, water, human and industrial resources through local, state, and federal cooperation.

As a coordinating, advisory agency the Iowa State Planning Board is functioning in the collection of basic data; in bringing together and integrating data, and in making plans preparatory to initiating programs of action; in making information and plans available to all departments and officials of the state, to city and county groups, and through the National Resources Committee to the Federal Government; and in serving as a clearing house and coordinator for certain federal activities within the state. Our work in land utilization may be cited as an illustration of this latter function. We are cooperating with the following agencies:

Federal: United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Erosion Service, Resettlement Administration, Emergency Conservation Work, Forest Service, Park Service, Water Resources Committee, and the Bureau of Biological Survey.

State: Conservation Commission, Agricultural Experiment Station, and Agricultural Extension Service.

County and City: County Agricultural Planning Boards, County Park Commissions, and City Planning Commissions.

In addition to the studies dealing with land use to which I have referred, the Iowa State Planning Board has made studies and issued reports dealing with the human, water, and industrial resources of our state.

Two Reports of Progress on all projects, as well as many special reports and pamphlets dealing with specific problems, have been published and made available to the citizens of the state. The facts obtained in a number of studies have been published by the cooperating agencies. A monthly publication is now edited and published by the Iowa State Planning Board and will be

mailed to all who request it.

The present program of the Iowa State Planning Board is financed by funds furnished by the Works Progress Administration, which are made available to the state for this purpose. At the present time 8 projects are in operation, on which are employed over 600 relief workers and about 45 non-relief workers.

The physical, economic, and social structures are ever changing. Therefore, planning and initiating programs of action constitute a long time program. Planning is progressive and never finished. It is not the work of a few years or of one generation.

State Planning Boards in more than thirty other states have been legalized by legislative action. The Iowa State Planning Board has not been made official by a legalizing act of the General Assembly of the state. Instead of predicting the future, may I express a hope that enabling legislation may be passed creating an official State Planning Board to carry on the coordinating, fact-finding, plan-making, advisory work of this present board, and authorizing the appointment of official County Planning Commissions.

DEAN AGG:

The next presentation will be a discussion of the relationship of planning to the health of the people of the state, prepared by Dr. Walter L. Bierring, State Health Commissioner, and presented by a member of his staff, Mr. A. H. Wieters.

MR. A. H. WIETERS:

Iowa is distinctly a rural state, as sixty per cent of her people live in the open country; and the inability of existing health organizations to meet the needs of rural communities has been recognized for a long time. The urgent need in each rural community is the creation of a single agency capable of preparing and putting into effect a well considered plan for the administration of the health affairs of the community as a whole. Before such a plan can be made generally available to all portions of the state, a local governmental obstacle must be overcome.

Iowa was settled and developed on a township basis. The statutes of the state provide that the trustees of each township shall be the members of the local board of health. There was no provision whereby these townships could join together in unified health work.

The Legislature in 1929 recognized the situation and created the Act known as the Permissive County Health Law, Ch. 65, 43rd General Assembly. In accordance with this law the County Board of Supervisors of any county in Iowa may adopt the County Health Unit plan, after which it shall appoint a County Board of Health to guide and direct all public health activities within such county.

The expenses incurred by the County Health Unit are to be paid by the County Board of Supervisors from tax collected funds legally available, and other organizations including local boards of health may unite in defraying

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the necessary operating expense of such county health units.

The development of County Health Units in Iowa has made rather slow progress compared with other states. In 1931 three counties in Iowa, Washington, Woodbury and Des Moines, placed their health work on a county-wide basis. During the latter part of the economic depression period, Des Moines and Washington counties were compelled to discontinue their county health unit.

By means of funds made available for public health services to Iowa on February 1, 1936, by the provisions of Title VI of the Social Security Act, it will be possible to supplement the necessary budgets required to re-establish county health units in Des Moines and Washington counties, as well as to assist in the formation of county and district health units in other parts of the state. Under the provisions of Title VI of the Social Security Act, which is under the supervision of the United States Public Health Service, the funds appropriated by the county will be matched by Federal allotment to the extent of providing a full-time public health officer, one public health nurse, one sanitary engineer, and one clerk, to the operating personnel of the particular county health unit concerned.

There are obvious reasons, in order to secure the benefits of this plan to the greatest number of people, why the organization of district health units comprising two, three or more counties, is more desirable in Iowa, than the single county health unit. Under the district unit plan, programs of immunization and other preventive measures can be carried on more readily than when the unit of organization is limited to one county.

In order that an efficient and comprehensive public health program can be scheduled to benefit all sections and particularly the rural communities of the state, a serious governmental obstacle must be removed through legislative amendment. There are at present in Iowa approximately 2500 local boards of health operating automatically as individual units independent of other governmental agencies of the same character. This produces the interesting paradox of multiple governmental units of common function and purpose, but each having separate or individual authority. A township board of health has the authority to employ personnel and other measures for health purpose, but the county Board of Supervisors pays the bill of expense attending the same.

A measure will be presented to the next legislature to amend existing statutes to make the county board of health, instead of the township board of health, the local health unit. This will greatly simplify authority and definitely extend the benefit of modern public health measures to every community.

The State Department of Health takes this opportunity to acknowledge its appreciation to the Iowa Planning Board for its sympathetic encouragement and valuable assistance in making it possible to inaugurate a statewide survey of public health resources in Iowa. When this survey has been completed we will be more fully conversant with the public health needs in every community of our state, and with the present expenditures for health work by various governmental and extra-governmental agencies, and the necessary legislative changes will be indicated. Furthermore the objective of a healthier state and happier people will be more fully realized.

Eleven A. M. Session: Chairman, Dean T. R. Agg.

PRESIDENT C. E. FRILEY: (Welcome to Iowa State College)

There are two levels of planning. First is that governed by established physical laws illustrated by great feats of engineering. Bridges and skyscrapers usually stand up -- a characteristic not so commonly observed in financial structures.

Engineering or physical planning requires decision on a specific physical objective, the existence of adequate technical knowledge to formulate an intelligent program of action, and a satisfactory plan for regimenting all the people on the job, without violating the recognized methods of discipline.

Engineering methods of planning are not so easily applied to the whole nation. There are few national objectives that are universally accepted; most of our national objectives, such as peace and prosperity, are to be attained by methods that cannot be figured out on a slide rule; the engineering technique, when applied to a whole nation, involves problems of discipline that are hard to solve.

Engineering planning is vital, but we must have in addition a definite program of social planning covering the larger and more general questions which are admittedly more difficult of solution. It involves the highly complex question of large-scale unemployment, personal security against the accidents of life, adequate production and distribution, and a reasonable measure of freedom from arbitrary regulation and regimentation. On this higher level we must think consistently and intelligently about our future, our class relationships, our place among the nations, the idea of plenty and our cultural ideal.

We are fortunate in Iowa to have a group of public spirited citizens such as the Iowa State Planning Board, actively engaged in a broad program of social and physical planning. We at Iowa State College are happy to welcome this conference to our campus.

DEAN AGG:

It is now my privilege to announce a lecture by Mr. Walter H. Blucher on the subject "The Place of Planning in a Government Organization".

MR. WALTER BLUCHER:

I have a feeling that there are three prime functions of all governments: planning, finance, and execution. If we consider the purpose of government as being the rendering of service which can best be rendered by the representatives of the people acting for all of them, we will find that most of these services, if not all of them, are divided into these three functions named. If it is a matter of providing education, sewers, water, electricity, police or fire protection, housing, social services, there must first be planning. Admittedly, many of the governmental activities seem to have been the result of a lack of planning rather than planning but, on the whole, every administrative officer and even every legislative officer must first have some kind of a plan of what he proposes to do before the necessary legislation can be

enacted or before the necessary administrative orders can be drafted.

I know, from reading the reports of the Iowa State Planning Board, that there are many planning problems in this State. There are not only state planning problems, but there are many problems relating to communities -- the cities in particular. I have seen that excellent series of reports showing housing conditions in a number of Iowa communities. The housing problem isn't one which can be treated merely as a matter of eliminating unsightly and blighted areas; it isn't a matter which can be treated only as one of rebuilding the run-down areas. Housing must be considered in the light of population and industrial trends and in the light of the development of the entire community. There is only one agency that I know of at the present time competent to develop programs of that kind and that is a planning agency.

A local planning agency, of course, doesn't serve as an executive or administrative body; it serves in an advisory capacity assisting the Mayor and the City Manager and the Councilmen and the Commissioners to develop programs which are based upon a study of existing conditions and probable future trends.

The up-to-date administrator, the man who is alive to present conditions and who is interested in giving his community that kind of government and administration which we must have if we are to avoid chaos realizes that we can no longer continue to carry on the functions of government by individual departments which do not relate their work to the work of the other departments. The up-to-date administrator, and I am glad that we have many already and that the number is increasing, knows that there is no single agency which can assist him in developing that rational program which he desires in a better fashion than can an alert and honest and adequately staffed planning department.

Afternoon Session: Chairman, Mrs. Henry Frankel.

MR. B. W. LODWICK: (The Relation of Planning to the Problems of Rural Rehabilitation)

The entire Resettlement Administration program is based on careful planning. Incidentally, if planning had been carried on as carefully during the past 50 years as it is being done now by the Federal Government through its various agencies, it is very doubtful if rehabilitation of the type that is now being carried on would have been necessary.

In Iowa, so far, the activities of the Rural Rehabilitation Division have been directed along the lines of individual assistance. Loans are based entirely on Farm and Home Management Plans that show a reasonable likelihood of the borrower's being able to maintain a fair standard of living, repay the loan that is being made to him, and be in shape at the end of the loan period, which is usually five years, to carry on without further Governmental assistance. Plans are made for a soils conservation or building rotation. Longer leases are being encouraged and assistance will be given in marketing and other problems that always confront farm people.

We hope to be able to take a more active part in planning for better community and recreational activities. Through our cooperative and community

service programs it is possible to assist in a financial way with the establishment of needed community centers.

One problem that has been given considerable thought on the part of this division is that of the man who has been a farm laborer, but who, because of the fact that a son has lost employment in industry and come to the parental home, suddenly finds himself without employment and (in a vast majority of cases, we believe) has been forced to move into town and into competition with an already abundant amount of labor, seek employment - often, however, failing to find it, and then -- relief. Would these men and their families be better citizens -- would the cost to the public be less in the long run if they could be assisted in establishing a home on a subsistence acreage basis in the community where they once lived and worked, and where they might again get their cash income from labor on surrounding farms?

It is distasteful and unthinkable for those of us who are Iowans to the core to sit by passively and see whole communities within our state definitely headed toward poverty with the resultant illiteracy and social problems that will have to be dealt with in a more costly manner sooner or later. A carefully planned and executed rehabilitation program can change this picture. It will require the best thought and support of those, in whose hands, the solving of these problems have been placed. The public in general must be awakened to the fact that it is economy in every way to see that it is done.

Those of us who are attempting to administer the Rural Rehabilitation program in Iowa recognize the need for a planned program to follow, and solicit the cooperation and help of the Iowa State Planning Board and local planning groups to the end that the greatest amount of service may be rendered with the funds entrusted to us.

MR. GEORGE KELLER: ("The Relation of Planning to Economic Stability")

A major problem of the Iowa State Planning Board has been the gathering and analysis of data pertaining to recent economic and social changes in the state of Iowa. Business men and scholars are agreed that such progress as can be made in improving economic and social conditions must be preceded by the collection of more information concerning recent trends and conditions. There is no extravagance in stating that no physician would attempt to diagnose a patient's illness with so little information as we have concerning our own economic and social ills.

The program of the Committee on Business and Industry of the Iowa State Planning Board has been designed to provide four types of information. (1) As much information as possible concerning the actual course of business during the past decade; these indexes were published and constitute a more complete statistical record of the course of business for the period 1926 to 1935 than is available for any other state in the Union. (2) Information concerning the economic problems of individual communities; it has been determined that, although the smaller towns in Iowa have suffered a declining importance as shopping centers for clothing and similar types of goods, they have retained in nearly all instances their original functions as centers for rural purchases of groceries, gasoline and similar frequently purchased commodities.

(3) Information relating to the industrial situation of the state. This

work has been divided into two parts, namely, the making of an inventory of existing industrial facilities and the searching for new industries.

(4) Information relating to the field of state taxation. Under the active encouragement of the State Board of Assessment and Review, the Committee is undertaking to determine certain pertinent facts of the Iowa taxing system. This work divides itself into two parts: a study of tax delinquency, and a study of the probable effects of homestead tax exemption.

The work of the Iowa State Planning Board Committee on Population and Social Trends has been directed toward the accumulation of factual information regarding past and present social conditions in Iowa with some attempt to analyze the significance of apparent future trends. Six lines of investigation have been undertaken relating to: (1) The past, present, and future growth and structure of the Iowa population, (2) the sources and distribution of the income of the people of Iowa, (3) the application to the state of a program for old age pensions and unemployment compensations, (4) social and recreational facilities and opportunities in Iowa communities, (5) crime and delinquency in Iowa, and (6) special technical service in cooperation with other Planning Board Committees.

MR. MURL McDONALD: ("Coordinating Urban and Rural Interests in a County Plan")

The population of Iowa in 1930 was approximately 40 per cent urban, 40 per cent rural-farm and 20 per cent rural non-farm, consisting largely of town and village dwellers. Over one-half of Iowa's population is directly dependent upon the farm for a living. Many of those living in towns and cities are also more or less directly dependent upon the land for their major source of income. Over 40 per cent of the farm land in Iowa is mortgaged, and during recent years the percentage of corporation-owned farms has been increasing. This means that a growing number of urban people have a financial interest in land. Likewise, the people living on farms are potentially heavy consumers of the products of labor and professional services, consequently rural as well as urban people have an interest in the problems of commerce and industry. Surely the experiences of the past, out of which have emerged the conditions of the present, have revealed the absolute interdependence of rural and urban people.

When the white man first stepped foot on this continent, the plan was born and soon projected to wrest these fertile acres from the red man, the jungle, the swamp and other native forces. As fast as land could be cleared or valuable mineral deposits could be uncovered, wasteful exploitation has been the basic plan. It is hardly true to say that exploitation and waste have taken place because we have not planned. Too obviously this has been the plan of the past from the results of which we cannot escape except by wiser planning.

We should be intelligent enough now to formulate better plans, but are we ready to make the immediate sacrifices that will be necessary in carrying out such plans? As we plan so shall we reap, for like causes produce like results. It is encouraging to know that some careful planning is being done, and to be able to meet here with a feeling of optimism and with some degree of assurance. Fortunately for us today most of the privileges we enjoy are the direct result of wise planning on the part of those who have gone before us.

You are, no doubt, more or less familiar with the recent contribution of the county agricultural planning committees. In every county a committee of farmers representing the various communities and the various organized groups has been working on a soil conservation program. The resources of Iowa State College, making available the best known information on crops, soils, livestock and agricultural economics, have been furnished these county planning committees. With this information at hand the committees have made a study of the local problems in soil conservation as related to the various soil types, systems of farming, etc. The final reports of these county agricultural planning committees are now being tabulated. The results are quite illuminating.

Out of these experiences, certain conclusions might be tentatively drawn. The first is that in order to do any satisfactory planning, the local committees must be carefully selected to include individuals who are well informed, genuinely interested and truly representative of group interests. Second, the planning committee members must have access to all available information from the Experiment Station and from trained technicians; and third, the findings of the research workers and technicians, no matter how carefully prepared, can be strengthened and improved by exposing them to the reaction of the rank and file of the people engaged in farming. By this method the ideal is adjusted to the practicable.

The plans formulated by the technicians or by any committee, board or group, need to be given the widest possible publicity and to be fully discussed by the laymen who are directly concerned. Indeed there must be something more than discussion on the part of the laymen. There must be developed a sincere desire to do something and a willingness to participate in the program.

It would seem that one of the most important duties of a planning board is to analyze thoroughly the whole field of planning and to divide it up into its essential parts or problems, then to provide for the assignment of each problem to some responsible group. Matters pertaining to agriculture should be assigned to the agricultural groups, educational problems should be assigned to the school folks; religious problems should be assigned to church people; relief problems to the established Social Service and the Rural Resettlement groups, and city zoning to Zoning boards, etc. After the problems have been determined suitable assignments can be made.

MR. J. L. BOATMAN: ("A State Plan for Soil Conservation")

Nature spent thousands of years building the top soils that were found in the State of Iowa when the land was first plowed. It was not uncommon to find, on some of the best land, 18 to 24 inches and up to three feet of top soil. Little farm land elsewhere in the entire country had top soils of such depth at the time it was first plowed.

The Soil Conservation Service has collected data at its erosion experimental farms which would indicate that 400 years are required to form one inch of top soil by natural processes. If this be true, it is quite evident that Iowa was endowed with soils that were seldom surpassed in agricultural value anywhere in the entire country or world. If Iowa people can only realize and appreciate the natural resource they have in the form of agricultural land it will not be hard to bring about better land use and soil conservation; but if

Planning, whether it be by the individual, a business group, a corporation, a community, a state, or a nation, is a primary factor in any stride towards success. In other years, when we were too busy making money, and while we were wasting the tremendous resources God gave to Americans, we didn't have time to plan. Really, we had the time, but we selfishly ignored the necessity. Our experience in the last five years, when we wandered desolate and panic stricken in an effort to find out what had happened to us, impressed upon the thinking people of the United States an imperative demand for an ordered system of national life.

By an ordered system, I do not mean communism, socialism, fascism, or any other "ism". What I do mean is that, under American institutions, we must very seriously consider the welfare of the present and the patrimony we shall pass on to our children and theirs.

Regardless of partisanship or factionalism, no one sincerely denies that something terrible happened to the United States a few years ago. Thinking men understood the situation and out of that was borne the National Resources Committee, composed of Cabinet Officials and staffed by leading technical men and women of the nation, who in many instances donated their time and energy to research and studies similar to those of the Iowa State Planning Board.

Planning is essentially a local function. No program of action should be started except by the citizens of a village, a town, a city, or a county. All that planners can do is make an intelligent study of what has happened, what the present situation is, and what, in the light of their technical experience, should be done about it. After that it is up to the localities to decide what they want to do. If localities disregard recommendations of expert planners, no one should feel disturbed, because after all self-determination is still the greatest privilege of an American citizen.

May I impress upon you, however, that because civic planning has long been one of the most important interests in my life, I am much more familiar with what the State Planning Board is doing than many of you might suspect.

And, if you think that's just hooey, stop in my office some day. You will find all of the Planning Board reports there. Not for literary looks, because no one ever accused me of being literary, but for reference on many occasions when questions arise which are vitally important to Iowa.

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ANALYSIS OF ATTENDANCE

County Representation
Included 42 out of 99 Counties

Adair - - - - - 1	Emmet - - - - - 2	Plymouth - - - - - 4
Benton - - - - - 4	Floyd - - - - - 3	Polk - - - - - 30
Black Hawk - - - - - 5	Franklin - - - - - 1	Ringgold - - - - - 4
Boone - - - - - 2	Guthrie - - - - - 6	Sac - - - - - 4
Buena Vista - - - - - 3	Hamilton - - - - - 2	Scott - - - - - 1
Butler - - - - - 7	Hardin - - - - - 9	Story - - - - - 67
Cerro Gordo - - - - - 7	Ida - - - - - 3	Tama - - - - - 3

they remain indifferent, taking too much for granted and continuing to exploit the farm land of this state, many of the more rolling sections will become so depleted and so badly eroded that the land will not provide a good living for the people farming it.

The Soil Conservation Service is a Federal agency which has been set up in the Department of Agriculture and assigned the responsibility of developing a national soil conservation program. The Service is working in close cooperation with Iowa State College and other agencies in Iowa, and expects to work out the soil conservation plan for the state following the recommendations of the Experiment Station and Extension Service. At present the Soil Conservation Service has five watershed demonstrations located as follows: Shenandoah, Greenfield, Knoxville, Marion and McGregor. In addition to the watershed demonstrations, twenty-one CCC camps have been assigned to the Soil Conservation Service to work under its direction in putting on soil conservation demonstrations. In all of the demonstrational work the Extension Service, through the County Agent, is cooperating with the Soil Conservation Service in doing the necessary educational and organization work.

In the case of camp demonstrations, the work is done in cooperation with individual farmers scattered throughout the county. These farmers are members of a county soil conservation association, an organization of local people set up for the purpose of cooperating with the Soil Conservation camp in establishing farm soil conservation demonstrations. In the watershed demonstrations, an attempt is being made to secure the cooperation of all land owners whose farms are located in the watershed. The purpose of these demonstrations is to illustrate, in an educational way, approved practices which have been recommended by state experiment stations and by the Soil Conservation Erosion Experimental Farms.

With the full cooperation of all existing agencies and farm people throughout the State, these demonstrations should point the way for a well-rounded program for the new Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act which was recently passed to replace the AAA which was ruled unconstitutional.

MR. J. R. FITZSIMMONS: ("A State Plan for Parks and Recreation")

The pioneers who settled Iowa enjoyed an environment of great natural beauty. Parks and recreation areas were a part of the natural surrounding.

With the growth of cities and closer settlement of the land, urban employment and work generally lost much of the outdoor flavor of pioneer days. Outdoor recreation has become a function of leisure time.

Parallel with this change in our working habits has been a constant limitation of areas for free enjoyment of leisure time. The favorite picnic spot, the fishing and hunting retreats, the corner lot and the old grove have been fenced in, pastured, built upon, drained or cut down. In short, the freedom of the "Huckleberry Finn" era is no more. We have been too busy building up our economic life, hoping thereby to secure more comfort and leisure, to give much thought to what we were going to do with that leisure.

Within comparatively recent years a realization of this situation has been voiced by outstanding groups in this state.

The Federal Government has already progressed far in its field of providing national parks and monuments for the preservation of outstanding examples of unique natural landscape, for the recreational use of all. Federal agencies have done much to encourage the creation of state park boards and, through them, state park systems.

The Iowa state government has slowly but thoroughly prepared its state plans for parks and recreation. After the creation of the Board of Conservation in 1918, a canvass was made of the state for sites worthy of state parks, or preserves. Over fifty per cent of the present park acreage was acquired on those sites prior to 1932. It was not, however, until 1933 that the full realization of a state plan for state parks and recreation was given tangible form. At that time the Iowa Conservation Plan was developed which definitely outlined a plan for state parks, preserves and those phases of conservation which directly affect such recreational phases as hunting and fishing.

Pollution and silting, destruction of suitable game cover and food, conservation of water, both surface and underground, unguided cutting of timber and needless and uneconomical destruction of priceless natural scenic areas loomed high as factors in the long-time plan. Thus, the anticipated "Recreational Plan" of necessity in operation became a "Conservation Plan".

What of the smaller units of park and recreational planning -- The Regional, the County and the Municipal units? Obviously the state governmental agencies should not be expected to supply all the parks and the conservation elements for all the necessary phases of recreation.

The State Planning Board has made a survey of the present urban and county recreational facilities. It has tabulated the potential county park areas, historic sites, woodland areas, water resources and the advisable use of cultivated lands. County and municipal agencies should examine their local situation; take advantage of the surveys and data already available through state and other agencies, carry on where they left off and prepare for immediate and future use a comprehensive county and city plan for parks and recreation.

The plan for state parks and state recreational areas as crystalized in the twenty-five year plan is a working reality, modified as time and changes have necessitated, but actively a potential force for healthy progress in that field. The county and urban planning programs await the force of local and tenacious enthusiasm. Many surveys and data are available for use. The proposition presents itself and awaits action from these units.

Dinner Session: Chairman, A. H. Wieters

MR. L. S. HILL:

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to be permitted to participate in a gathering of this kind because for more years than I care to remember I've been actively interested in the city planning commission of Des Moines.