

What Public Officials Can Do In Post-War Planning

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Since I am on this program as a representative of the Indiana Economic Council, I believe I should spend a short time in telling you something of the origin, purpose, and personnel of this Division of State. The Council was created by an Act of the 1943 General Assembly to succeed the former State Planning Board. The Act defines the purpose of the Council in the following words:

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Council is to make a thorough study and investigation of the natural resources, industry, population, and allied matters. The Council formulates plans and makes recommendations for the further development of the State's resources which will be helpful to agriculture, labor, mining, manufacturing, industry, the transportation of persons and goods, the conservation of forests, soil, stream flow, parks and parkways, game preserves and other resources and activities in the State, and for adequate provision for the future population of the State.

PERSONNEL

The Council itself consists of twenty-two members; six of whom are ex-officio, including the Governor and the directors of five important State departments; four members representing both houses and both parties of the General Assembly; and twelve citizen members, representing agriculture, business, labor, and local governments, as well as both of Indiana's universities.

An analysis of the statement of purpose will indicate that the duties of the Council are comprehensive indeed. To state the situation more briefly, the function of the Council is: (1) to provide for the co-ordination of planning by the various State departments and divisions; (2) to be of assistance to the counties, cities, and towns in studying and solving their problems where planning is the indicated need; and (3)

to conduct the necessary investigations of problems affecting the present and future economy of the state.

It will be obvious to you that any part of such a program that we can carry on at any one time will be small by comparison with the number of problems which require and will justify careful consideration. However, we do attempt to keep in touch with the entire field, and for this purpose there have been established eleven committees of the Council, which will be responsible for their particular fields of interest, namely: Agriculture, Manufacturing, Labor, Health, Conservation, Population, Transportation, Education, Housing, Aviation, and State Resources Survey. A tentative listing of the questions to be considered for each committee has been drafted and is now receiving their attention.

It may be appropriate at this time to point out that the Economic Council was not established to do your thinking for you, nor does it seek to produce a utopian existence to be foisted upon one and all. The Council does not possess, nor does it desire, any administrative powers to carry out its program. There does exist, however, a keen desire to be of service in assisting governmental units and other public interests and determining the facts regarding the many problems with which they are confronted, for submittal to the governing bodies for such action as they may deem appropriate. Furthermore, we do not profess to be experts in all fields of government, but there are some activities in which we have had considerable experience and do feel qualified to advise. But more important, through the membership of the Council and the resources of the various branches of state government and educational institutions, we do have the sources of information and experience to guide us in almost any field of activity.

As a start of such studies as we can now carry on, we are actively engaged in four specific subjects. The *first* of these is concerned with the *housing of State departments* and divisions in Indianapolis, so that if any action is taken in the future to provide for the bringing together and the adequate housing of all such offices, the fundamental requirements as to what will be needed will be determined. The *second* subject receiving consideration is that relating to the establishment of a complete system of *county forests*. The Legislature of 1943 provided the counties with the necessary authority to establish and maintain county forests, and it is our belief that such a system of forests will be of great value not only in protecting and renewing one of our greatest natural resources, but in improving the economy of the counties as well. Usually thought of as an agricultural state, Indiana has had a

long and profitable experience in the production of lumber and other forest products. The present war-stimulated demand for wood is greatly accelerating the normal steady decline of our forest resources, and, in consequence, the related losses of ground water, soil, and wild-life. The national and state forests as well as the many fine farm woodlots will very soon be the only remaining reservoirs of lumber and wood-fiber materials, but it must be recognized that such resources will be of limited capacity, when judged by the present and ever-increasing demand for such materials. On the other hand, there are many thousands of acres in Indiana, and well spread over the state too, which through long and often heart-breaking experience have demonstrated their inability to produce cultivated crops profitably. But the chances are one hundred to one that they will grow timber. Frequently such lands have become delinquent in tax payments, and being unprofitable, go begging for bidders at tax sales. Such lands contribute nothing to communities and are a liability against other properties in the locality. It is such lands as these that the counties should take title to and dedicate for public forest purposes. Such forests will do more than grow trees; under proper management they can provide a source of fuel wood for the needy; they provide excellent cover for game birds and animals; they afford an opportunity for picnic parties; if large enough, they may be utilized as public hunting grounds; and finally, they may provide for the utilization of indigent labor forces which counties frequently find on their hands. It will be noted that county forests can usually be established at little or no cost to the local government, and a complete system of them throughout the state will mean much to the wood-using industries of Indiana in the years to come.

The *third* subject lies in the field of *aviation*. While we are not willing to go completely overboard, as many enthusiastic commentators have done regarding the future of aviation, we are definitely of the opinion that aviation will become increasingly more important in the years which lie ahead. The fundamental requisite in meeting the needs of air transportation is the airport—without it planes can neither land nor take off and give the type of service which transportation by air can provide and without which any enterprising community will find difficulty in the competition of the post-war world. Our office is ready and willing to consult with any community on its airport problems and to be of whatever assistance it can in furthering its activities in this field. We are also contemplating a complete report on "Aviation in Indiana", in order that the State may become familiar with the problems in this field that it must meet in the post-war world.

The *fourth* subject is concerned with what is commonly known as *post-war planning*. The Council has been designated as the State agency to promote and co-ordinate this work in Indiana. Since you are all particularly interested in construction, and since it has been an orphan in the planning effort, I will confine my remarks to it. In fact, I will deal with only one of the divisions of construction that is commonly called "public works". In passing, I would like to mention that we are vitally interested in the promotion of private and industrial construction. The construction industry, always considered one of the major industries, has at the present time assumed extreme importance, since it has no conversion problems. Since there is a mass of "needed" public works available, one can readily see that the construction program is the one that must be prepared to carry quite a portion of the load during the coming transition period. A few weeks ago I read a booklet called "Plan Now for Future Public Works", published by the United States Chamber of Commerce, which contained a fine statement regarding the availability of public works in the Nation. I take the liberty of quoting a portion of this text:

Under present war conditions, the public works programs of cities, counties, and states have been reduced to only maintenance of most meager nature, for the very simple reason that neither men or materials are available for other than maintenance. No one can prophesy when the end of the war will come, but it is certain that before it does come there will have been built up an extensive deficit of repair, as well as of desirable new public works. Already streets and roads are showing wear and tear, that would not have been tolerated during peacetime. Many miles of old streets, for lack of maintenance, will need complete rebuilding in the post-war period. Many needed street and highway improvements, widening, relocation, grade eliminations have been postponed. Health facilities have been neglected, needed sanitary sewerage extensions have not been made, sewerage treatment plants cannot be built or expanded, water works improvements have been abandoned, needed main extensions postponed, fire protection facilities limited to the minimum. All of these things add to the public works deficit and all of them can be classed as capital improvements that would not have been postponed had it not been for the war. One of the better contributions of the relief period was the farm-to-market road program, and the expansion and extension of such farm-to-market roads is an excellent example of post-war public works that can readily be planned ahead of time by the counties.

I take it for granted that we all agree that we have a large backlog of public works available. What is the next step? I would answer—the arrangement of the projects in relation to the need and value to your community. I would like to inject the thought here that the

Economic Council has no authority or desire to influence you or to dictate to you in your choice of projects. We do, however, hope that we can influence you to bring as many of your chosen projects to the *blueprint stage* as soon as possible, so that we may not come to the time of need with "too little, too late". Gentlemen, it is my opinion that one of the best safeguards against another relief program is a well-prepared construction program. I feel that if this is accomplished and we come to the time of stress, needed and useful construction will be accomplished by contract in the usual manner, instead of the so-called "leaf-raking" by relief labor. In my contacts with the various governmental units of Indiana, the question most often asked is—"What should be the controlling factor in our choice of projects to be planned?" It seems to me the answer is clear—NEED. If we keep the thought "need" in our mind at all times, we certainly will not go wrong in our efforts and will not, nor could not, be criticized by anyone. We certainly could and would be criticized by every citizen in the state, if we fail to be prepared—since in this case we cannot plead ignorance. We have had previous experience, and this time we have been warned of what may occur. I am also often asked—"Which of our list of needed improvements shall be designed first?" You probably have the same question in mind, and I would suggest the following procedure:

1. Projects that you are financially able to design and construct without any assistance.
2. Projects for which you are financially able to plan and partially able to finance the construction.
3. Projects you are neither at this time financially able to prepare complete plans and specifications for, or construct without some outside help. Do all that you can with these and also list them with the Economic Council—telling us all the facts about the matter. We will keep a separate schedule of all needed and desirable projects sent to us that cannot be financed at this time by the local governments.

You may have noticed in the past week or two some publicity regarding our first preliminary tabulation and report filed with Governor Schricker. This report covered post-war plans sent by 141 of the 1,895 governmental units in the State. These 141 units sent 561 fine projects, which in my opinion would show a total estimated cost of nearly 100 million dollars. Only about one-third of these projects is planned to the blueprint stage; the second third is in the preliminary planning stage; while the remaining third is in that stage known as the "talk

and hope" stage. It is impossible to give an accurate estimate of the total. We are extremely happy to have received this number of replies. When we consider the fact that the report did not contain data for either a first- or second-class city, or the excellent program of the State Highway, I feel that we can say it is "not too bad".

The one worry that I have is that our time may be too short—we are all moving too slowly. We may find that the very word "post-war" may be misleading. Did it ever occur to you that our conversion period, and therefore the period of greatest unemployment, may come long before the actual end of the war? Perhaps many of you may have had the privilege of hearing some of the talks made by Mr. C. Scott Fletcher, National Director of Field Development for the Committee for Economic Development, while he was in this state in November. The following is taken from a reprint of his speech in Evansville:

Stressing the fact that the time for planning may be short, Mr. Fletcher asserted, "The government at the present time is cancelling war contracts at the rate of more than 1,000 per month and when Hitler is defeated, war production may be expected to drop 75 to 80 percent!" I believe that Mr. Fletcher's statement is accurate, and our time for planning may be limited.

Since my subject is "What Public Officials Can Do on Post-War Planning", I would like to make a sort of resumé of what I hope I have brought out in this presentation. I am advising those in authority in any governmental unit to plan as quickly as possible every *needed post-war project*; I am asking you to plan—*first*, those projects for which funds are available for both planning and construction. In case there is any question in your minds as to my earlier statements, I am asking you to prepare plans, if possible, for those projects that you do not know how to finance at this time. My reason for saying this is the fact that neither you nor I, nor anyone else, knows at this time when the time of need will arrive; what your financial condition may be at that time; whether or not conditions will be so severe that outside assistance may be offered each one of you. I consider the preparation of these plans somewhat along the line of insurance. I am sincere in my belief—and I find this belief is shared by a great many other people—that a good backlog of well-planned projects will be the best insurance against another relief program. Finally, I am asking you to report your plans as promptly as possible to the Economic Council, so that we may co-ordinate the plans for the entire state, and if finally we find that there are some localities where planning will not be sufficient to carry the contemplated load, we can at least attempt to secure state or federal projects to help over the time of crisis.

Since Professor Lommel has the discussion of this subject, and since the discussion is often much more interesting than the original talk, I will close by quoting a sentence or two from the column of Barnett Nover in the *Washington Post* of November 11th (Armistice Day):

The various more or less isolated campaigns fought by the Allies up to now are now merging into one campaign . . . At best, the Third Reich has another year before its course is run; its doom is likely to be sounded well before the next anniversary of the Armistice of 1918. And when the collapse comes, it will come not gradually, like the melting of snow, but suddenly like an avalanche. For this, too, we must be prepared.