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William S. Bonner

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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THE PLANNING AGENCY IN STATE GOVERNMENT*

WILLIAM S. BONNER

University of Arkansas

Development of State Planning

Before 1933, little had been done in the way of state planning. Previous to that date, Wisconsin and New York had made a beginning in the field. With the creation of the National Planning Board in that year came the impetus which resulted in the creation of state planning boards in nearly every state of the nation.

In 1933, the National Planning Board suggested to the governors of the various states that they create state planning boards in order to aid the federal government in public works planning. The response was overwhelming, and within two years 47 states had created such boards.

State planning boards were granted federal aid if they met certain conditions. The major conditions imposed on the states involved: the appointment of an unpaid planning board by the governor consisting of at least four state department heads as well as citizens, assurance by the governor that he would sponsor legislation to put the planning board on a continuing basis, securing by the governor of necessary personnel to staff the board, development of a planning program, selection of a qualified planner to direct the work, and willingness to cooperate in an interstate agency if one was formed. In return for meeting these conditions, the National Planning Board assigned full-time consultants to the state agencies, assigned relief personnel to help carry out its program, and offered to coordinate their activities.¹

No two state planning agencies were similar as to programs undertaken. The state agencies cooperated with the National Planning Board especially in making inventories of various resources of the nation. Generally, the work within the state agencies was not too well coordinated.

In the late 30's the number of active planning agencies began to decrease as state legislatures failed to make appropriations. With the abolition of the National Resources Planning Board in 1943, the position of the state agencies was further weakened.

With the entrance of the United States in World War II, many agencies aided governors with war planning and later post-war planning. After the conclusion of the war, a few agencies were abolished, and a number of others had their functions transferred to development agencies.

State planning and state development agencies have dealt with a number of problems. These have included: land use; water and mineral resources; economic surveys and industrial development; industrial promotion; tourist promotion; state public works, highways and airports; social services including health, education, and recreation; the general role of state development; and management planning and research.

Organization of the State Planning Agency

State planning agencies have been headed by an unpaid commission or board. This was the direct result of one of the conditions set forth in 1933 by the National Planning Board if states desired federal aid. It also followed the general policy of making a public agency multiheaded in order to protect it from politics and outside influence. When a permanent staff is maintained for the planning agency, the director of the staff is in theory responsible to the commission, and in theory the commission determines the planning policy.

In practice, the organization functions differently. Planning is a comprehensive matter and it is difficult to find persons who have the background and

¹National Resources Board, *State Planning* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1935), pp. 8-9.

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the time to serve on an unpaid commission that is to formulate planning policy. A director of one state planning agency made the statement that while his commission was composed of capable men, the commission accepted the policies of the planning director.² Perhaps it is too much to expect persons engaged in a full-time pursuit of their own to find the time to become acquainted in any detail within the broad field that state planning encompasses.

One of the arguments used to support the commission type agency is that it gives different interests representation on the planning agency. But can such representation be broad enough at the state level even on large commissions? One representative, of say business, is not representative of all types and kinds of business.

The commission form does relieve the planning staff of political pressure and interference. A change of administration does not generally effect the planning staff. This is vital if long-range unbiased planning is to be accomplished.

There may at times be a need in the planning agency of utilizing an advisory committee to work on a specific problem. When such a committee is deemed advisable, broad representation can be secured. This would provide the planning agency with the opportunity of conferring with and seeking the advice of the committee on the particular problem. The North Carolina State Planning Board used such a committee successfully in studying children and youth in 1946.

A properly organized and staffed planning agency can relieve the governor of much pressure brought against him by varying interests. The agency can provide the governor with an almost unlimited source of nonpartisan information produced by the best brain power and experience the state has to offer. When the agency has the confidence of the governor and is respected by those who work with it, it can save the state many times the cost of its operation and contribute to improved state government.

The Need for a State Planning Agency

In a departmental system of state administration, there is a number of weaknesses that can be strengthened through proper use of a state planning agency.

One of these weaknesses is the lack of coordination and combined action among departments. State government has become so complex that the governor cannot personally coordinate its activities.

Another weakness is the lack of technical advice from the best expert opinion. Employees of the state are generally so busy with their day-to-day tasks that they do not have opportunity to give adequate attention to long range problems.

There has generally been a lack of an organized thinking body in state government which can take the initiative in submitting to the governor, and through him to the legislature, the long-range programs which seem of little importance at the moment to the average law-maker and citizen.

Department heads are generally busy satisfying public opinion, not creating it. The need for an agency that can present facts to the public is genuine.

The utilization by local political subdivisions of the powers and responsibilities granted them in the planning field under the state constitution and legislative enactments generally fall far short of expectations. An agency is needed that can provide technical and advisory service to aid those local units in developing their own programs for improvement.

The Functions of a State Planning Agency

If the need for a state planning agency is recognized, the functions of the agency become apparent.

A basic function of the state planning agency is to gather information, through research, on the various problems and resources of the state and to pre-

²Hayden Johnson, former director of the Tennessee State Planning Commission, made this statement to a graduate planning seminar at the University of North Carolina in 1947.

pare long-range plans concerning those problems and resources for the governor for his approval and action. In the preparation of these long-range plans, consideration must be given to the programs and activities of the various state departments in order to prevent duplication of effort.

The planning agency can serve a useful function by aiding the governor with the preparation of legislation, especially that of a technical nature.

The state planning agency can serve as a clearing house of information between the various agencies of state government and between local governmental agencies and the state.

A technical and advisory service should be provided by the state agency to aid local governmental units with their planning problems and programs.

The state planning agency should not be assigned administrative functions, that is, made responsible for the execution of any plan or program. When supervisory or administrative functions are assigned a planning agency, the planning function suffers.³ Planning is a full-time job itself.

The Theories of Functions of a State Planning Agency

Three theories of functions of a state planning agency can be recognized at the present time. These theories are:

- (1) The reorientation theory
- (2) The development-planning theory
- (3) The planning-development theory

The first of the three theories is concerned with coordinating state services and giving these existing services a long-range development plan. The latter two theories are concerned with the physical development of the state, geared to a long-ranged plan, and differing as to emphasis and procedure.

The reorientation theory holds that the function of the planning agency is to prepare long-range plans for the activities of the various departments in cooperation with the staffs of those departments.⁴ This theory recognizes that long-range comprehensive planning is desirable for every activity carried on by state government. This theory also recognizes that department heads are often too busy to plan for future needs and changes, and that the department head is not in position to coordinate his department's program with the programs and plans of other departments. The planning agency thus provides the assistance to get the planning done, and being interested solely in the state's betterment rather than individual service, can coordinate the various plans into a comprehensive state plan.

The reorientation theory holds that state agencies charged with the administration of various programs must themselves become a part of the planning process that develops the programs. If the administrative agencies are to take part in the planning process, department heads would have to be made free from day-to-day tasks in order that they may turn their attention to the development of long-range plans and programs.

The planning agency takes on the role of a catalytic agent by getting the various state departments together to work out plans and programs. This of course would be an ideal solution to carrying out the planning function. However, certain practical problems may arise. In a corporate form of organization, the head can direct the subordinate units to present a unified program or plan before any consideration will be given to budgets. There is no escape around the head. In state government, this may not always be true. Many times

³John D. Millett, "Planning and Administration," *Elements of Public Administration*, Edited by Fritz Morstein Marx, (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1946), p. 132.

⁴John E. Ivey, Jr. advanced the reorientation theory in his graduate planning seminar on State Planning at the University of North Carolina in 1947.

Ivey held that the broad policies and procedures which had been followed by state planning agencies had not produced, to that date, as effective a working relationship as might be desired either within state government or among the people of the state. These unsuccessful policies and procedures were: "(1) planning and administration should be separate responsibilities; (2) the planning board should make the plans and turn them over to other branches of government; and (3) the planning process should be executed through an advisory relationship between the planning board and other branches of State government."

independent and semi-independent bodies will attempt to by-pass the governor and appeal directly to the legislature if the governor does not agree with the proposed programs. The governor, through proper utilization of his planning agency, could present to the legislature a strong case for his position and keep state agencies in line with his program.

The *development-planning theory* emphasizes the development of the resources of the state and the promotion of industry within the state.⁵ This emphasis is justified on the grounds that it makes possible a higher standard of living and that this automatically results in better health, greater security, and the various other things that government ought to promote. The agency under this theory encourages the location of new industry within the state and expansion of existing industry using the various concessions granted by the state and local areas as major advantages. These concessions take many forms including tax exemption, free buildings, free or less than cost municipal utilities and so forth.

The *planning-development theory* places its emphasis on adequate governmental services for the state in general and for industrial areas (actual or potential) in particular.⁶ The main effort in this theory is to strengthen local communities through encouraging them to have available adequate services and facilities. Attention is given to the adequacy of such items as power, water, fuel, recreation facilities and programs, schools, housing, municipal finance and administration, and similar other items.

The development-planning theory and the planning-development theory each have strong advocates, especially in the southern states.

South Carolina and Mississippi are typical of the states supporting the development-planning theory. The act creating the State Agriculture and Industrial Board in Mississippi includes the following declaration of policy:

"That the present and prospective health, safety, morals and pursuit of happiness, right to gainful employment and the general welfare of the citizens demand as a public purpose, the development within Mississippi of commercial, industrial, agricultural and manufacturing enterprises.... That the accomplishment of the things herein authorized to be done by the several municipalities will give to them local benefits peculiar to each."⁷

The planning development theory receives support from Alabama, Virginia, and especially Tennessee. Tennessee grants that new industries will often make community improvements possible, but the fact remains in their mind that a community must be attractive as a place to live if industry's attention is to be invited. The director of the Tennessee State Planning Commission wrote in *State Government* "We of Tennessee sometimes shudder at the extent to which *development* predominates in some states and planning, particularly at the local level, is made a step-child of the state program."⁸

The planning-development theory has also received support from leaders in industry. Responsible individuals of a number of leading industrial firms have stated that in looking for new locations that community services and facilities receive prime consideration. Good schools, housing, recreational facilities, stores, and local government are important. Concession on taxes and municipal services are not requested or even desired. This attitude was amply expressed by S. B. Williams, Director of Public Relations, Sylvania Electric Products, Inc., in a talk before the annual meeting of the Association of State Planning and Development Agencies in 1950. Williams said: "We feel that taxes are the only way a community has of raising money to pay for necessary municipal expenses. We want to pay our share the same as anybody else, but we want to be sure that the taxes are fair. If we don't pay our share someone else has to pay it. Perhaps at a later date we, too, would be paying a part of someone else's taxes, and that we wouldn't like."

⁵Albert Lepawsky, *State Planning and Economic Development in the South*, (Kingsport: Kingsport Press, 1949), pp. 81-83.

⁶Ibid., pp. 81-83.

⁷Ibid., p. 82.

⁸Harold V. Miller, "State Planning and Development-Tennessee Style," *State Government*, Vol. 23, No. 7, (July, 1950), p. 150.

The future course of the planning agency in state government is not a set one. There is no doubt need for basic reorganization within state government itself if the planning function is to be able to operate most effectively. The actual program that a state agency will undertake and the emphasis placed on the constituent parts of the program will vary from state to state. However, it is important that neither the planning or development function be neglected if the state is to advance not only economically, but socially and politically.

