

THE PLANNING OF LAND IN RELATION TO MUNICIPAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS*

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IN Canada and the United States the land has been planned, but not scientifically. As a rule, land has been planned on the lines that are easiest, and with little regard to economic use and natural conditions, or on the lines that suit the narrow point of view of the private speculator. We have witnessed the folly of that haphazard and wasteful method; nearly every municipality on this continent is paying the cost of bad planning.

All municipal government centres in the various phases of land development, both in town and country. Every public utility has to obtain its justification from the service it renders to land and improvements erected upon it; and the cost of government is high or low in proportion as the land is wisely or unwisely developed. We need scientific planning in both our rural and our urban districts, and it must have for its primary object the development of our resources (including human life) and the increase of production.

Must Apply Scientific Principles

We need only fear increase of population and over-production if we do not raise the standard of life, of comfort and of efficiency of our population, and to accomplish these things we must lay out and develop the land with these as the main purposes in view.

If we desire to increase wealth, we must apply scientific principles to the planning of the future growth of our cities, towns, villages, rural townships and metropolitan regions comprising portions of each,—so as to increase the productive use of land, lessen the burden of taxation caused by unproductive utilities, create better facilities for carrying on industries (including improved methods of transportation) and promote public health and more agreeable conditions of life for the citizens.

The art of city, town and rural planning is in its infancy, and the scientific data required to afford guidance to the planner is very inadequate. Whatever need there may be for planning, the greater need at the moment is the determination of the right principles on which planning should be carried out and the discovery of the rational order of things to be dealt with in the plan. In other words, city and town planning has to follow the true logical order, and be developed to a greater extent as a science before it can take its rightful place as an art. Investigation, by means of observation and experiment, to discover facts and their mutual relations, must precede all creative work in connection with any reform of our social conditions.

Character of Suitable Areas

We must have a constructive social outlook to which to work, and acquire adequate knowledge of the underlying conditions on which to build up our plans before we start to prepare them. The objective we should aim to reach is the development of a healthy and efficient social and industrial organization which will give us the maximum of production coupled with the highest degree of equality of opportunity. With regard to the methods of acquiring knowledge, we must recognize that we have to deal with a combination of physical and social conditions that overlap at every point. We have to make a survey of both these sets of conditions, and before we do so we must determine the character of the areas that are best adapted both for the preliminary study and for subsequent plans.

Our political units are divided into three main groups,—national, provincial or state, and local. These divisions are arbitrary and are not always best adapted for planning. For

instance, in the Niagara region, the planning of future industrial growth is international, in Kansas it is inter-state, and in nearly every city it is inter-municipal or metropolitan.

Manufacturing industry is ceasing less and less to be influenced by city boundaries, and on the other hand the necessary relationship between manufacture and agriculture compels attention to the overlapping problems on both sides of the boundaries of every city and town and creates regional problems. Perhaps the worst housing problem in America is to be found in the "buffer" area, or "no man's land," that lies just over the boundaries of the cities. Something must be done to bring about the co-operative action of adjacent local authorities to deal with this problem.

To plan properly and control industrial and residential areas we have, therefore, to introduce a new geographical unit, namely, the regional area. The Niagara district is such an area, so also are the metropolitan areas of Greater London, Greater New York, Greater Montreal and Greater Boston. The study and comprehensive planning of these regional areas is one of the most pressing of our social needs, and should precede the planning of the local incorporated areas within them.

The division of areas might be given as: (1) National or federal; (2) provincial or state; (3) regional, i.e. any combination of incorporated local areas, or parts of such areas, forming an industrial region; (4) incorporated local (urban or rural), e.g. city, town, village or county area.

National and Provincial Plans

What has been called "nation planning" is incomprehensible in the sense in which we use the term "city planning." You cannot plan a nation, nor yet a state or province in any detail. But there are certain things both in the nation and state or province that should be dealt with from the comprehensive point of view of a central authority.

It should be a rule never to do anything by a centralized form of government that can be efficiently dealt with by a local form of government. The local government authority in a free commonwealth should have the maximum of power and responsibility consistent with efficiency. Granted that this is true, we recognize that the sphere for national or state planning must be very limited. The character and scope of the national operations will depend on the character and scope of the national jurisdiction.

In Canada the federal government has different powers and duties from those of the federal government of the United States, and what I have to say in respect of the former will not apply in detail to the latter,—although the general principles will be applicable to both.

The question may be asked whether the limited scope of planning available to our federal and state or provincial governments is not amply provided for in our political organization. The answer is in the affirmative, so far as power to deal with the matter is concerned. In the exercise of that power, however, the political measures of our central governments in relation to the development of land are not directed with proper care towards the object of the public welfare and are not preceded to a sufficient extent by scientific investigation.

Limits of Governmental Knowledge

This does not question the intentions of governments, but indicates their self-imposed limits of knowledge of the problem as a comprehensive whole.

We have good departmental heads, and experts are employed under them to investigate social problems in compartments within the powers granted by political parties. But too frequently we introduce political measures, and set up administrative machinery to deal with social problems on the basis of isolated examples instead of on the basis of scientific investigation of facts and conditions.

The function of the federal government should be to investigate the broad national aspects of the problems of land development, industrial location, health and transportation. We have our departments available to deal with these prob-

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