

WHY PLAN? _____

CYRIL O. HOULE

MAN PLANS as naturally as he draws breath. Only his most impulsive acts omit any element of consideration for the future. Almost always an analysis of behavior will reveal some element of choice which is related to expected consequences. Some choices are conscious and deliberate; others are almost automatic, springing from habitual activity, and the attitudes it has developed.

The actions of social groups, like those of individual men, also usually contain some element of planning, related more or less directly to the real purpose that the group serves. It may be said, for example, that men plan when they cast their votes for one of the various candidates or policies which are presented to them. Likewise, planning is implicit in most of the acts of a group itself, whether they are performed jointly or by individuals working for the entire number.

The opinion has become increasingly prevalent in recent years, however, that generalized and random planning is not enough. Both theorists and practical men, as they face the consequences of an unordered world in which man's accomplishment falls far short of his aspirations or his possibilities, insist that more attention must be given to the process of thoughtful consideration of the future. Planning activity must be less implicit and more explicit.



FSA Photo

... to give a kid a chance

Men must think more carefully about their road to the future.

Wise Planners Begin by Determining Goals

The most important aspect of planning is the perfection of the ends sought. Unless an individual or group is willing to consider ultimate goals in a rational fashion, it will be impossible for either to arrive at a clear definition of the objective among the confused, cross-cutting, and contradictory purposes which are frequently present. To choose one end and adhere to it is to eliminate or subordinate other ends,

We take for granted the planning in our personal lives. But when we come against problems of a broader scope—how to provide recreation for teenagers, how to clean up a slum area, how to build a nobler world—we sometimes flounder helplessly and seem to forget that planning is necessary. Cyril O. Houle of the University of Chicago introduces the articles of this issue of *EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP* with a discussion of the elements of good planning and the reasons why planning is sometimes opposed.



... for decent
homes and a
good life

Photos National Housing
Agency and U. S.
Housing Authority

and this sometimes seems to impose a hardship. Not to choose, however, is fatal to progress. Anyone who has ever been part of or dealt with an enterprise in which there was lack of clarity concerning objectives will be well aware of the confusion and frustration which such a condition brings.

Once the goal is established, and the general direction for further action is set, the planning activity must consider the question of means. A constitution, a legislative act, a joint agreement, or a personal decision may indicate an objective. Before it can be achieved, however, careful planning of methods and procedures is usually necessary. Here is the special sphere of the expert, who, from his knowledge of previous similar situations and the principles which have grown from them, can indicate the best ways to proceed.

Some People Don't Want to Plan

The desirability of planning, as a conscious human endeavor, is so apparent that one may wonder why it has been opposed



both by active antagonism and by apathy and neglect. An examination of this attitude brings to light a number of facts about planning in the modern world.

Some people, quite frankly and simply, are anti-intellectual. They place any faith or hope that they may have for human improvement and development in emo-

tional reaction and habit formation. They are unwilling to grant that the intellect can have any continuously controlling influence.

Others are fearful of making the assumptions that must underlie all planning, particularly that which is to be projected some distance into the future. No planning can be rigidly confined to a particular situation. It must be influenced in part by other outside factors. For example, how could one community plan for the post-war world without considering the trend of events in the state, the nation, and the world? Since there are so many uncertainties, how can one establish any valid point of reference? Why bother to plan?

Still other people dislike planning because they have particular interests which they fear will not be dominant in the final program. Sometimes this concern is an honest one, but usually it grows out of a special narrow interest. Such an interest is unsupported by the necessary principles of right and justice which will permit it to prevail when carefully examined and subjected to open and free discussion.

Planning Gets Results

The advocates of planning find their

most effective answer to these three general objections not in heated debate but in citing and describing practical illustrations. Most of the opposition and apathy to planning, they point out, grow out of a failure to reflect upon its real and practical usefulness.

Consider, for example, a group of people going on a journey. They must decide jointly on their goal. Is it to be the joy of traveling or the attainment of a destination? If the latter, what destination? Once this major point is decided, what is the best route to achieve the major goal? To answer this question, a large amount of both discussion and technical advice may be required. Even when the route is laid out and the journey started, changes must often be made in terms of unforeseen conditions such as a storm or the illness of a member of the group.

In so homely an illustration as this, the desirability of planning is evident. In larger social contexts, however, can it be useful? Can it maintain its essential elements of democracy and flexibility in combination with expertness?

The authors of the subsequent articles in this issue say that it can. And, by their own precept and practice, they prove it.



FSA Photo



NHA Photo

... for clean, happy living for youngsters

Copyright © 1944 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.