as small as 5,000 may be permissible. If, on the other hand, they are to handle only general relief it is very doubtful whether any smaller than 10,000 in population should be permitted. For otherwise case loads would be too small to permit the employment of professionally qualified social workers on a full-time basis and to justify the establishment of a properly equipped local office. Smaller communities might be authorized by law to join voluntarily with others to form welfare districts having a population in excess of the minimum to be permitted. Where such arrangements were not worked out, it would be appropriate for the provincial welfare department to perform administrative functions, at the same time charging against the local authorities the same share of costs as if they were running their own services. This latter policy would be necessary to prevent small municipalities from gaining a financial advantage over larger places.

It may also be desirable to make provision for metropolitan welfare districts to serve the urban areas clustered about the larger cities.

Significant precedents for both of these proposals may be found in the public health field. In Quebec, Nova Scotia and other provinces rural health units have been established to serve the citizens of several municipalities; while since 1936 the Vancouver Metropolitan Health Board has served the city of Vancouver and a number of its satellite communites.

In the next article four additional principles of reorganization will be proposed. These deal with equitable adjustment of provincial-municipal financial responsibilities, revision of provincial administrative machinery the setting of standards and the supervision of local agencies by the provincial governments, and the modernizing of the local welfare departments.

A Focus for Urban Planning

By Melville C. Branch, Jr.

IT was not so many years ago that the term planning was none too well received in the parlors of public opinion. Some were convinced that this planning implied autocratic controls incompatible with our tradition of rugged individualism. Some were so content with their own lot that they forgot to look beyond their own particular lot lines. Although few understood what planning actually meant, almost all joined in slamming the door of disapproval in the face of this suspicuous stranger.

To-day, we find a different picture. There is now almost a quizzical smile of welcome as the idea of planning for our cities and towns is introduced. This pendulum swing has resulted from two developments—the accumulation and aggravation of serious problems of a planning nature within North American cities and towns, and the disruption of communities by the gargantuan defence expansion now under way.

We are fast becoming aware of the serious problems of our cities, and are finding ourselves face to face with urban difficulties which cannot be ignored or continually postponed. We are feeling the effects and the pinch of maladjustments which have been steadily growing worse over a period of years. Our cities are faced with rapidly increasing debt, with transportation confusion and inefficiency, with a serious lack of adequate terminal facilities, overlapping governmental jurisdictions, a municipal tax base badly in need of study and revision,

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egal limitations on municipal action, serious over-zoning, illogical physical patterns, housing shortages, and a host of other problems. These are difficulties of our existing urban plant, which expanded with haphazard abandon and which has depreciated drastically in efficiency, value and last but not least—livability.

The second impetus to the more cordial reception to-day to the planning idea has been a natural outgrowth of the glaring dislocations caused by defence expansion in North American communities. For many of these localities, the great influx of new industry and people has created a confusion not unlike the most chaotic days of boom-town expansion. Not a few cities have been doubled in size and their problems multiplied manyfold. Other localities are vexed with the implications of a steady industrial shift from peace-time production to the manufacture of war materials. But few localities have possessed any organization for planning with which to meet these difficulties. Municipalities will be placed under further strain if we are to feel the solid impact of military aggression. There is no need of further emphasis, for both the existence and severity of such conditions are well known.

And now we hear the first voices of perhaps a coming chorus for urban planning. City planning commissions, civic groups, regional planning organizations, metropolitan bodies, public works planning councils, are all being recommended, discussed and quite a number organized. Such a gathering momentum is desirable—but only if it moves in a truly constructive direction. Adding agencies will not of itself automatically improve matters. The increasing recognition of the planning process can be another will-of-the-wisp shibboleth — an escape mechanism—or it can be a powerful means of gradually reordering our municipal organization.

Effective planning for our cities and towns is confronted by two fundamental barriers. Unless these are gradually lessened, we can hope for no real improvement. What are these barriers? The first involves knowledge, the second involves the social mechanism through which planning can be accomplished. As in the case of carpenter or mason, we cannot build planning success unless we know our craft and unless we have the necessary tools.

Although we have increased our background of urban knowledge with respect to certain parts of urbanism, relatively little progress has been made in casting light upon the way these different parts relate one to another. The existing situation is analogous to that of a mechanic who has acquired a certain familiarity with different odd parts of an automobile engine, but who has not made sufficient study of how to put the different parts together. Obviously, he cannot do the one thing of prime importance—make the engine run. And the one thing of prime importance we want for our cities, is to make them run —and run well.

There are many practical examples of this hiatus in urban understanding. Traffic congestion, for instance, is obviously far more than a nuisance. Casualty lists, involving in the United States last year over 35,000 killed and 1,320,000 injured, are only part of the costs and repercussions of urban transportation chaos. Special traffic police, patrolmen withdrawn from other activities of the force, uncollectable municipal hospital bills, the increasingly complicated and expensive mechanical paraphernalia of traffic amelioration, represent some of the costs to municipal government and to the taxpayer. Gasoline, increased automobile depreciation and parking represent appreciable direct costs to the city-dweller, for if we assume that traffic congestion causes 20 extra automobile stops and starts each day, then these delays cost the average motorist per year over 10 per cent of his annual gasoline bill—because of the extra fuel required alone. These are but several of the costs of transportation congestion and inefficiency. They represent an all-important relationship between perhaps the two

most important urban factors to-day—physical movement and urban economy. What does this congestion mean in terms of public and private costs? Can we afford such congestion, or will it pay us in the long run to systematically reduce this recognized maladjustment? Do we have adequate informational basis for inaugurating 5, 10 or 20-year comprehensive programs of expenditure and improvement? Who should pay and what proportion? Or are these costs less than we think, in terms of other considerations? Do we at least have sufficient evidence to insist that new urban development does not continue to repeat mistakes of the past? These vital questions involve a relationship which must be considered, if cities and towns are to be able to prepare transportation programs on anything but an insufficient basis almost amounting to guesswork. As yet, it has not been adequately considered.

Cities and towns have long had properties delinquent in taxes. But it is only in comparatively recent years that the significance of this delinquency to local government has been recognized. It has been shown that, at least in many cases, these areas represent an important non-paying segment of the municipal tax base. In addition they tend to encourage or accelerate blight. And yet, it was only within the past year and a half that the Mayor of one of the largest cities in the United States was persuaded of the importance of looking into the question of how many tax delinquent parcels of land existed in this city, where they were located, and what percentage were chronically delinquent. He did not know, and did not want to know—until he was shown the important relationship between this tax delinquency and his budget. Most towns and cities have not yet recognized this interrelationship. Once they do, they will discover that their desire to take constructive action will relate once again to the inadequacy of their legal powers of public land acquisition.

We have yet to show the full implications of overlapping and conflicting governmental jurisdictions on numerous urban problems and especially on efforts at improvement. Improvement will come only if we can clarify these relationships as a basis for democratic action, which cannot be forever delayed.

Our second fundamental urban challenge involves the social mechanism through which planning programs are translated into reality. The best laid plans of both mice and men are of naught avail, if they cannot gradually be carried out. There must be tools with which to build, or we can produce only paper plans and paper programs.

The deficiencies of our social mechanism for planning effectuation are so numerous and so glaring that we have good cause for genuine alarm. Not only is it almost impossible to apply simple planning forethought in terms of past experience, but we cannot even plug the loopholes which have appeared in many of the laws and regulations already adopted. We are dealing with no trivial matter, but with the attitudes of the people of our nation and the instrumentalities which they will permit or demand. The entire problem is of such great significance that its implications reach to the very roots of our democratic tradition and are of vital importance to the whole future of our North American "way of life."

Urban planning has long since passed the stage where it involved only superficial physical planning, for it must of necessity include social and economic considerations which are the web and woof of existence. An unenlightened or corrupt local government, an irrational municipal tax base, can represent greater barriers to effective planning than severe physical limitations.

The deficiencies of our social mechanism for planning solutions to reduce urban problems, are so numerous and so varied that outstanding examples can be found here, there and everywhere. At one end of the scale, we find the fundamental question of city powers and their relation to state—in Canada provincial—governments. Cities are creatures of these governments: They exist only in terms of ex-

press permission granted by the legislatures, operate in accordance with powers delegated by these bodies. It is, however, the influence of rural representatives which very often prevails in the legislatures. The balance of control which exists to-day had far more rhyme and reason in the days when the majority of the population lived in rural areas, than to-day when the situation is reversed.

The whole vast problem of the caliber and efficiency of local government is a vital part of this social mechanism for planning. When the modern planning movement in the United States first gathered momentum around 1880, there was greater distrust of the honesty and ability of municipal government than there is now. As a result, planning commissions were set up as semi-autonomous bodies in order to supposedly divorce the planning efforts of the higher brackets of citizenry from the reek and ignorance of City Hall. This type of administrative organization has not worked properly in the larger cities. City-planning commissions can make plans, but they have not been close enough to the economic and social problems of local government to make their plans well—or even workable. Great numbers of such plans have lain unused on dusty shelves of disregarded material, since their completion and presentation to the local government. Planning involves every function of local government. Plans cannot be carried out without local government. In effect, planning is government—if government is to truly represent the people and the community. Whether we like it or not, one of our most basic problems is to improve municipal government. This is our definite responsibility as citizens in a democracy and as individuals believing in the necessity of planning forethought. It is hardly necessary to add that we have not been fulfilling this responsibility, for the weakest link in the chain of government to-day is local government—including cities. It is important to remember, in this connection, that a chain always breaks at its weakest point.

Another basic difficulty is the irrationality of municipal governmental jurisdiction. We are all aware of the absurdity of city limits, when large segments of urban populations have spilled beyond these artificial and meaningless boundaries. But nothing has been accomplished by and large to reconcile this situation and establish a rational relationship between governmental base and urban area.

Specific deficiencies in our social mechanism for planning are numerous. Urban planning and urban government are faced, for instance, with totally inadequate powers of municipal land acquisition. Even our laws for the acquisition by municipalities of land chronically tax delinquent are, in many cases, so filled with loopholes that evasion has been encouraged.

Although we have far to go to achieve the urban understanding needed to-day, we are still technically ahead, in some respects, of what we are able to accomplish through the existing social mechanism. We are being delayed, while our urban problems multiply in number and severity. We cannot afford delay. Either we develop united effort to create locally the tools with which we can gradually effect solutions, or we undoubtedly face increased central control. It is obvious that we are so far behind that this second fundamental barrier is a gargantuan problem. In addition, it involves matters at the very roots of our personalities, as individuals and as citizens of a democratic land—disinterest in local government, failure to assume an individual responsibility for improvement, an unwillingness to balance personal desires with other considerations of equal importance from another point of view, selfishness. These are deep roots indeed, but the planning tree is like Nature's tree. It is nourished and pushed forward by its roots.

Our over-all problem, difficult as it is, is not so much whether we can find the intellectual way, not so much whether real improvement can be made through existing institutions, but whether we have the will to do the job—and do it now.