

In striving toward this goal the two main aspects of the problem are being kept in mind—the necessity for removing the economic burden of illness from the individual while at the same time raising the standards of care available by an

improved organization of the health services and facilities. The government does not wish to subsidize an inefficient program of a low standard on the one hand, nor to see model services built up which will be out of reach of the people.

To Build or Not to Build: A Rejoinder

By C. H. CHATTERS

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last year's summer issue of PUBLIC AFFAIRS published an article "To Build or Not to Build" written by Grant Crawford, the Director of the Institute of Local Government of Queen's University. The article has evoked a good deal of criticism and now Carl Chatters, Executive Director of the Municipal Finance Officers' Association in Chicago, takes issue with Mr. Crawford.

THERE must be some merit in looking ahead to see what a municipality needs. One would receive the opposite impression from an article in *Public Affairs* published in the summer of 1945 issue. The article was entitled "To Build or Not to Build."

The author of the article stated his position somewhat as follows: If prosperity follows the war then private wants should be satisfied before public construction is started. If there is a depression after the war, then municipal public works cannot provide the remedy for unemployment because there is not sufficient volume of municipal public works and because the municipalities are financially weak. If the plans for post-war public works were to be all ready when the war ended, then municipal councils would be inclined to act hastily and therefore erroneously. The author has so many "ifs" and doubts that he would solve the problem by doing nothing.

There is some merit to some of the points in the article. However, there seems to be evidence to indicate that municipalities which do some thinking and some planning will fare better than the municipalities which do nothing. In other words, there seems to be a greater probability of reasonable action by munic-

ipalities which plan in advance than by the municipalities which do not plan in advance. Certainly the experience in the United States during the depression years demonstrated that the municipalities with some plans and some money of their own obtained something worth while of a permanent nature from all plans for public spending, while those cities which had no plans, no foresight, and no money of their own spent all of the grants from superior governments without obtaining anything of worth while or permanent value.

The previous article contended that if a period of prosperity followed the war, then private wants should be satisfied before public works were constructed. This conclusion overlooks the very important fact that the greatest private needs may have to be met with the co-operation of the government and through the financial powers of the national, provincial, and local governments. If industrial construction is undertaken, then huge local public works must be constructed to supply water works, sewers, and roads. If homes are built by private financing in large numbers, then public expenditures will be required for streets, sewers, water works, and all other public facilities. History seems to indicate that the period of greatest private expansion also demands large expansion of public expenditures for public facilities.

The principal objection to public works during a depression period seems to center around the statement that they

cannot be successful because they require "a degree of top level planning of which we have as yet seen no evidence." If this statement is true, which is doubtful, then there is need for careful thinking and careful planning instead of a total absence of thinking or planning. If public works have not been co-ordinated because of poor planning, think how badly they will be carried out if there is no planning. To repeat what has been said before, the history of the depression indicated that the money spent for unemployment relief from 1931 to 1939 brought nothing of value except to the municipalities with sound plans, both physical and financial.

It can readily be conceded that public works should not compete with private demands for labor and material unless the public works are necessary for the public health and welfare, unless the public works are necessary for private construction, and unless the public interest in some improvement, such as a sewage disposal plant, is more vital than in the private works which may be desirable but are not strictly necessary. In other words, the most necessary type of public work should have precedence over less necessary public works, and private construction should have preference except where the materials and labor are needed to construct public works which have a priority because of their relation to other vital private works or public works.

Likewise, it is true that public works cannot serve to relieve local unemployment. They cannot do so alone except for a short period. However, local public works constructed at the proper time can relieve unemployment at its most critical stage.

Mr. Crawford's article in the summer issue assumes that advance planning leads to hasty action. This is not borne out by post-war events. If there is no advance planning of public works or finances generally, then whatever action is taken must be hasty or necessary things will be unnecessarily delayed.

There seems to be far less danger of ill advised action from persons who have thought in advance about what they would do than from people who are totally unprepared to meet a situation which arises suddenly. The planners may be starry eyed, as the previous article says, but municipal councils are realistic.

Personally I have far more faith in the elected bodies of our municipalities than Mr. Crawford has. They are representative of their communities. They know their community needs. Of course, they need help from the people who spend their entire lives as appointed officials. Furthermore, the argument that these bodies will act better and more reasonably if no thinking is done in advance hardly seems reasonable in the light of our post-war experience. So far in both Canada and the United States public work is going ahead very slowly because of high costs and the shortage of material and labor. Even though money is plentiful and interest rates are cheap, far too little public work is being done. The situation with respect to housing in the United States and perhaps in Canada as well is proof that far more planning would have been useful. Millions of individuals are without homes or without adequate living quarters primarily because no one foresaw the housing shortage or had any plan on what to do about it. Consequently, the government of the United States has appropriated \$191 million just to move and re-erect or remodel temporary housing for the temporary use of war veterans and university students. Surely the action would have been better if there had been more planning and more thinking which would have permitted not delay, but immediate action.

There is one statement in Mr. Crawford's article with which I disagree so strongly and so completely that I simply must say that it is beyond my comprehension how any such statement could be made. The article says, "Delay, that much abused characteristic of gov-

ernmental operations, while it may be irksome and at times dangerous is in general the great protection of the citizen and the taxpayer against hasty, ill advised and exceedingly expensive action on the part of his representatives." The public wants action, not delay, and it wants action based on intelligent thinking based on careful planning. How can any reasonable man assume that all prompt action must be ill advised and exceedingly expensive!

Municipalities need a general financial plan, including the financing of all of their physical needs. The municipalities which develop a complete and sound financial plan, have it adopted by the municipal councils, and finally convince the people of their community that they have a good

plan, will find they have erected the best barrier there is against hasty and ill advised action. The municipality with such a plan can place all proposals against this plan to see whether or not they are reasonable and whether or not they are in keeping with the best financial interests of the municipality. On the other hand, a municipality without any clean cut, overall financial plan does yield to expediency and makes every decision on the basis of public pressure instead of public interest. Intelligent public action in all municipalities must be based on careful thinking in advance about the needs of the community and not on a philosophy which indicates that delay is the greatest protection of the citizens.

A Look at Two Russian Farms

By CHARLES E. KELLOGG

NEAR Moscow last June I had an opportunity to see two Russian farms—a state farm and a collective. Whether or not these farms are "typical," I don't know; but I have no reason to think they were much better than others, judging by the other farms I saw from the train, auto, and plane while traveling across the country from Baku to Leningrad and from Moscow to the Bering Sea.

Naturally they were smaller than the great farms in the less humid grain-growing areas further south and east. Like everything else in the Soviet Union, these farms bore the obvious signs of the extreme shortages that reflect complete mobilization of resources for war. In fact, one lacks utterly the words to describe the enormity of the Russian sacrifice

for victory. For this reason also, these two farms probably look quite different now than they did 4 years ago or will look 4 years hence.

The General Pattern

The pattern of farming in eastern Europe and Asia is one of agricultural villages rather than scattered farms, as in most of the United States and Canada. This pattern is very old in Russia. Before the Revolution most of the peasants lived in villages and farmed the land around them. Some worked on land that was owned by the village; others worked the land of large estates that belonged to individuals, especially to members of the aristocracy. A few middle-class individual farms had been organized, especially in the years just before World War 1, but now it seems that the most of these have been absorbed into either state farms or collectives.

The land of the old villages was allotted according to the number of villagers. The total land area was first divided into sections according to soil quality and

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dr. Kellogg is Chief of the Division of Soil Survey in the United States Department of Agriculture, and author of the book, *The Soils That Support Us*. He was one of 15 American scientists who attended the Jubilee Session of the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., as their guest. At these meetings, commemorating its 220th anniversary, held in Moscow and Leningrad last June, he had some opportunity to see their agricultural research institutes. More recently, he served as Secretary to the Committee on Agriculture at the first conference of FAO in Quebec last October.