

State of Iowa
1945



IOWA POSTWAR REHABILITATION COMMISSION

Report Presented to
The Governor of Iowa
and the
Fifty-First General Assembly
January 1945

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Iowa 51st General Assembly
January, 1945

SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY
MADRAS 14

Iowa Postwar Rehabilitation Commission
709 Crocker Building
Des Moines, Iowa

January

1945

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

January 2, 1945

Hon. Robert D. Blue
Governor of Iowa
The State Capitol

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Dear Sir:

Herewith is transmitted to yourself and the 51st General Assembly of Iowa the final report of the Iowa Postwar Rehabilitation Commission in accordance with the instructions contained in Joint Resolution No. 6 of the 50th General Assembly.

The Commission, appointed by your predecessor, Governor Bourke B. Hickenlooper, by authority of the above Joint Resolution, is fully conscious of the incompleteness of the report. New facts are constantly available and new conditions developing. It is hoped, however, that the recommendations contained herein may be a starting ground for a state policy that may ease the shock of reconversion of the economic life of the state to a peacetime basis and make less difficult the reabsorption of her service men and women and war workers into the ways of peace.

Respectfully,

Don L. Berry, Chairman
Barr Keshlear, Secretary

IOWA POSTWAR REHABILITATION COMMISSION

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Barr Keshlear, (Secretary), Shenandoah
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*Highway Committee report is printed as a separate publication.

ABSTRACT OF SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the Legislature designate some state agency to act as an overall determining body to pass upon the timing of state public works so as to avoid competition with private enterprise when work is plentiful and to accelerate public works when needed. (Page 7)
2. That consultation and advisory service be provided at the state level to assist municipal and other governmental units in accomplishing a similar desirable timing of public works. (Page 7)
3. That the Legislature memorialize Congress to announce a definite policy on federal aid and inform the Congress that Iowa does not favor Federal Aid for local projects. (Page 8)
4. That the Legislature take such action as will empower cities, counties and school districts to levy a tax sufficient to defray the expense of planning improvements in advance of final financing. (Page 9)
5. That legislation be enacted to permit local governmental units, for the time being, to accumulate surpluses which may be expendable for projects when men and material are available. (Page 9)
6. That a comprehensive program of highway improvement and extension be adopted covering a 12-year period which would provide surfaced roads to every farm home, extend financial aid to municipal streets and roads, and complete primary and secondary road system maintenance and construction. Methods of financing on a "pay as you go" basis are also recommended. (Page 9 and separate report of Highway Committee)
7. That the State Conservation Commission Program for needed improvements in parks, lakes, forests and game areas be put into action as soon as men and materials are available. (Page 10)
8. That much needed improvements on state institutions and the construction of a State Office Building be undertaken as soon as possible. (Page 10)
9. That soil conservation measures be encouraged. (Page 10)
10. That some State Authority be designated to deal with the Federal Government in accepting or purchasing surplus war materials for the state and governmental units. (Page 11)
11. That authority be given health officials to enforce sewage treatment regulations and guard against stream pollution. (Page 11)
12. That local public health organizations be reorganized to avoid possible introduction of tropical diseases brought back by returning service men and perform other needed health services. (Page 11)
13. That legislation be enacted to permit negotiation with other states looking to the abolition or relaxation of interstate trade barriers. (Page 11)
14. That the General Assembly memorialize Congress in favor of distribution of surplus property through regular trade channels. (Page 12)
15. That the state request the reorganization of the National Guard at the

close of the war and that the State Guard be continued for the next biennium. (Page 12)

16. That a state building code be adopted. (Page 12)
17. That special consideration be given to ways and means of improving obsolescent urban areas. (Page 12)
18. That a permanent State Resources and Development Commission be created to promote Iowa industrially, agriculturally, and recreationally. (Page 12)
19. That measures be considered for curbing land speculation. (Page 13)
20. That a State authority be empowered to accept federal school aid and that such aid be administered by state and local educational agencies. (Page 13)
21. That consulting service be offered at the state level to survey educational needs of local school districts. (Page 14)
22. That a long range program of adult education be encouraged and financed. (Page 14)
23. That State veteran's benefit laws be revised extending benefits to World War II veterans and the creation of a State Veterans Affairs Department. (Page 14)

INTRODUCTION

Long before a battle is joined with the enemy an estimate of the situation is carefully prepared and detailed plans are thoroughly worked out for every operation and operating unit. Our task for the peacetime era requires no less careful thought and logical procedure.

Immediately following every major war in the United States there has been a short temporary business slump while industry became readjusted to civilian production. Then usually several years later there followed a far more serious depression when foreign production was restored and markets became glutted with civilian goods beyond the purchasing power of the people.* The extent and seriousness of such depressions we believe can be greatly lessened by wide use of foresight or planning. Foresight must be used not alone by government at all levels but by private enterprise and the quasi-public service industries, trade, including retail and wholesale, as well as transportation and communication facilities.

The most serious of all our depressions followed the first World War by slightly over ten years and was finally completely eliminated only by the preparations for World War II.

It requires no genius to understand that no nation, no matter how rich its natural or financial resources, can indefinitely endure such staggering shocks to its economy.

The only means at our disposal for accomplishing this gigantic task of stemming the recurring tide of unemployment and depression is our own ingenuity and foresight, avoiding past errors and using our incomparable production capacity which in reality turned the tide of World War II to the amazement of the entire world. We must open up challenging opportunities for peacetime constructive effort that will focus the attention and the ability of these men of genius who built up our great war productive capacity into a well conceived and balanced peacetime production program that will rebuild and conserve our depleted resources and provide high standards of living for our citizens and enable us to maintain our place of leadership in world trade and commerce.

What is Iowa's share or stake in this tremendous task if, as some reliable authorities have stated, 12-15 million new jobs must be provided if large scale unemployment is to be avoided? *With "full employment" at 54-56 million this would mean an increase of 8-10 million jobs more than in 1940. Iowa's share based on population and the number in the services and war industries, would probably be around 160,000 to 200,000 of new employment opportunities needed after the close of hostilities. Recent War Manpower Commission estimates indicate this figure may be considerably less; due to retirement from the labor force of older men and many women. A breakdown of these figures into specific employment programs and projects will be included later in this report. What needs emphasis here is the approach to the fundamental problem of employment in contrast to previous programs or lack of them in the past.

In the first place we have now recognized in time the necessity for careful preparation of plans for both public and private works. Second, there is general acceptance of the great advantages of teamwork at all levels of government as well as by private industry, including management, labor and agriculture. All must work together for the common objective, victory over mass unemployment. While teamwork is essential the Federal horse cannot or should not be expected to carry a large share of the burden. It is essen-

*House Committee on Economic Policy and Planning Fourth Report Page 18.

tial that we recognize that vast expenditures of Federal funds do not offer a permanent or economic solution to unemployment. In addition the Federal Treasury is now burdened with debt and benefit payments to veterans, the aged and social security compensation. The State and local governments, however, are in far better financial condition to handle their own employment problems than ever before.

Of course, a great deal will depend on the revival and maintenance of foreign trade, both exports and imports, and markets for agricultural and industrial products.

Even at best agriculture cannot be counted on for much increased employment except for normal replacements due to retirement and a limited number of younger farmers. Farming operations are now on large farms with more machines and fewer hired hands. While agricultural production in recent years has increased greatly this has been accomplished with fewer workers and the tendency toward more efficient practices is likely to continue. Even industry, in order to compete successfully in postwar foreign and domestic markets must produce more per man through machine operation and assembly line production than formerly. Every possible effort must be made to lower production costs by lower living costs of workers through decentralization of manufacturing plants themselves and the replanning of large conveniently located housing developments within walking distance of plants and downtown employment centers or near mass transportation facilities. It is recognized that vast possibilities exist for industrial development in many hitherto unknown fields which may provide jobs in amounts difficult to estimate. It is also true that Iowa is in a splendid position to take advantage of the large scale decentralization of existing industry which may follow the war and which would provide greater employment in the state. These are indeed our new frontiers, which envision no new lands to exploit but rather the intensive improvement and use of what we have and can produce.

As standards of living and environment are raised, our needs and desires increase requiring many heretofore unknown services and facilities. Here will be found the greatest employment reservoir. In this category would be wholesale and retail trades, laundries, transport, power and communication services, and the professions as well as many other and new services. Incidentally one of the important professional shortages for several years even before the war and, of course, now to a far greater degree is the planning field itself. Very few trained and experienced planners and planning technicians are available. Just calling an engineer, an architect, or an economist a planner doesn't mean he is qualified by training or experience to exercise the manifold tasks of coordinated planning procedure. This presents a challenge to the Universities and Colleges which may mean the success or failure of the whole postwar planning program. Here is a fundamental service requiring earnest attention.

During the immediate postwar reconversion period some public works, especially those of the service type, will be needed to insure full employment. Many of these such as highways, municipal services and local business have been or are being planned for now. Furthermore, the construction industry so heavily counted upon for public works, can ordinarily provide not more than 5 to 10 per cent of the total employment. But this does not include the vast potential backlog of employment that would be involved in an urgently needed private housing rehabilitation and rehousing program.

This is not to be confused with public subsidized low income housing which is another needed, though quite different program. Thousands of homes all over Iowa are in dire need of long deferred repairs, remodeling and modernization. By a concerted cooperative effort among architects,

tradesmen, labor and suppliers of materials as well as state and city planning officials and other agencies such a movement built from the ground up could take up much of the unemployment slack for at least ten years if properly coordinated with orderly construction of new homes by private builders and individuals.

This is the type of employment that not only provides jobs almost unlimited but at the same time raises standards of living, increases demands for both consumer and durable goods, and stimulates local community pride and stabilizes property values.

Another type or group of projects which can begin almost immediately upon the close of hostilities, providing machinery is available, is road repair and building, limestone crushing for agricultural use, sewage and water supply replacements and renovation, soil conservation improvements, reforestation and provision of more complete and modern state, county and community recreation facilities.

As we approach maturity as a state and nation, we find that our wasteful practices in the past have depleted many of our natural resources through unplanned exploitation.

A definite trend toward better husbandry in the use and development of these resources has been underway more or less intermittently since the time of President Theodore Roosevelt. A statewide and comprehensive program of conservation of soil, forest, minerals and water carried on largely by private individuals under state guidance and Federal cooperation would not only provide employment but would tend to increase and maintain the productive capital of the state.

These planned programs together with the stepped up privately sponsored enterprises and the few needed Public Works and Services interspersed, when men and materials are not required in private industry should not only stabilize employment during the immediate postwar years, but they should provide permanently sound and continued employment engaged in full production at good wages which should result in constantly rising standards of living and environment.

Organization of this Report

There are two quite distinct, though interrelated and often overlapping, approaches to our postwar problems:

One, the immediate task of finding productive employment for returning service men and war workers during the first months or years following the end of the war. This urgent phase of our program is considered in Part I.

Two, the long range planning and development of our state resources for their most effective use over a long period of years for the best interests of the people. A brief of these problems is considered in Part II.

Following Part II will be found the reports of the special committees of the Commission with other basic information.