

- Jan. 14: "Public Recreation"  
 Robert Moses, Commissioner of Parks, New York City; President, Long Island State Park Commission; Chairman, New York State Council of Parks
- Jan. 21: "Possibilities in Tax Title Lands"  
 Frank Moore, Counsel, Association of Towns of the State of New York
- Jan. 28: "From Acres to Lots"  
 Gordon Whitnall, Member California State Planning Board

**The Social Science Research Council's Committee on Public Administration.** Political scientists will be interested in developments in the program of the Committee on Public Administration of the Social Science Research Council announced recently by Robert T. Crane, executive director of the Council. The present chairman of the Committee is Louis D. Brownlow, director of the Public Administration Clearing House. A committee staff has been appointed, consisting of Charles S. Ascher as secretary and Joseph P. Harris as research director. Mr. Ascher is a graduate of the Law School of Columbia University, formerly counsel of the City Housing Corporation, and more recently the assistant director of the Public Administration Clearing House. Among his activities in the last-mentioned post was the organization of several of the new professional associations of public servants, including the National Association of Housing Officials and the National Association of Planning Officials. Mr. Harris received his doctorate at the University of Chicago, subsequently taught at the University of Wisconsin and the University of Washington, and during the past year served as assistant director of the cabinet committee on economic security which formulated the social insurance program of the Roosevelt Administration.

The appointment of a continuing staff for the Committee has much significance. The members will assist the Committee in the preparation and execution of a program of research in public administration as developed by the Committee in coöperation with scholars and administrators interested in problems of public administration, and more immediately implement the decision of the Committee to "capture, record, and lay the basis for the appraisal of measures instituted in the United States for grappling with the consequences of the world-wide social and technological changes that have been coming to a climax in the post-war period." The object, continues the announcement of the Committee, "is, if possible, to get fixed points of guidance—to add to the store of principles of administration so that, as government faces new problems and expands still further its activities, its regulatory functions, and its economic enterprises, those who must make the administrative decisions may profit by recent and current experience. The report of this experience must be obtained in large measure from those who are or have been actors in the drama when the events are still fresh in their minds; and . . . the

study should not be one merely of minutes and executive orders, but of the forces which led to the event, the various possibilities which were canvassed, and the reasons for the decision made."

Students of public administration will be grateful for this positive effort to preserve a more intimate and pungent account of recent and current developments in public administration—a project already undertaken by the Committee through Dr. Arthur W. Macmahon of Columbia University. The new federal programs and agencies are so varied and extensive that the individual worker in this field has been overwhelmed in obtaining even the most superficial information and the more obvious published materials. The kind of record which the Committee is concerned to preserve will be literally invaluable to those who may attempt a more considered appraisal of events and a more mature inquiry into interpretations and deductions.

The larger policy of the Committee which is indicated by the establishment of a staff, and more particularly by the appointment of a secretary and research director with so intimate yet comprehensive knowledge of the field of public administration in this country, is equally important for students of public administration, who may properly feel, indeed, that the committee will be increasingly of direct service to them. Many have felt for some time that fresh and original research in public administration would not be discouraged, but would indeed be supplemented and aided, if several workers in different institutions and regions could relate their individual projects to a common program. Frequently an individual student would greatly welcome an opportunity to make his own contribution count more effectively through sharing with others in a common attack upon a problem too large for a single person to encompass. Many important problems in public administration, too, require extensive cooperation and material support for adequate analysis and study. The studies that have been under way for some years in the field of forest taxation illustrate the advantage of drawing upon the research resources of several institutions in different parts of the country, while many problems of state and local government require comparative treatment after careful preliminary planning with field study in many places.

All such enterprises offer many difficult problems of organization and procedure, but the Committee is aware of the difficulties and faces them with frankness. Thus it may frame some major studies, and if no appropriate agencies are available to undertake them, it may feel that they are so important that it will seek support to have them undertaken under its own sponsorship. But its major opportunity for service will be rather to discover the studies being undertaken in various institutions and by various individuals or those which are contemplated, and to "bring the individuals engaged upon these studies into acquaintance," with the hope of enhancing, without additional effort, their value. The Committee sug-

gests that such a program "offers opportunities for comparative and complementary studies of great value that otherwise might never be possible. The proposal does not require or invite central domination or direction, but rather it gives to scattered, and sometimes isolated, scholars assurance that research which they may undertake in some local aspects of the new administrative problems, planned in coöperation with similar studies elsewhere, will illumine problems of wider scope." This point is particularly relevant to the fostering of coöperation between scholars in political science departments of the universities and research workers in the governmental research bureaus, the agricultural experiment stations, schools of social work, government departments, professional societies, and other institutions concerned in some part with administrative problems.

It should be added that the Committee is interested not only in studies of the federal government, but equally in state and local government and the shifting relations among all three. An aspect of particular interest and growing importance is that of regional consciousness of common governmental problems reflected in regional administrative organization. Here the services of the Committee and its staff may have a special value in encouraging several individuals or institutions in a given region to undertake joint studies.

There has been some discussion among social scientists concerning the value and place of "coöperative" research, undertaken by large staffs or by scattered individuals working at some single project. The experience of the Committee should give us useful data as to the way in which individual efforts may be made more effective and more widely useful. Certainly in the conduct of graduate studies in the universities it should be possible to make the doctoral thesis, for example, more genuinely rewarding to the student and of real value to other students of the subject if individual projects were planned in relationship to other projects. There is an increasing awareness by many professional groups—for example, among engineers, foresters, and agricultural economists—of the importance of the public administrative aspects of their professional problems. Indeed it is probable that political scientists generally are not as aware as they should be of the contributions being made by many of them to the body of knowledge important to them. Certainly an opportunity is now being presented through the Committee for making use of the Committee and its staff for encouraging and assisting the individual engaged upon research in public administration.

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