

I come from a county which has no ocean, palm trees, natural lakes or sandy beaches.

Among the many things it does have is a concentration of industrial research facilities which are rated among the nation's finest.

These researchers are interested in how the world will look and live in future years.

So am I.

They help to keep this nation moving forward by anticipating tomorrow. No one in government, today, can afford not to follow their example.

Long before the end of this twentieth century, we and much else of the country, and especially the East, will have space problems of dimensions which will not be susceptible to redevelopment or any other corrective measure.

I know this has been said before. I hope it will not need to be said too often again before discussion is replaced by action at all levels of government.

My immediate concern is with the future of Allegheny County, but as a representative of the National Association of Counties, I am here to urge the simple proposition that programs without funds inevitably get nowhere.

I would not like to speculate on the quality of living in Allegheny County in the closing years of this century and in the beginning of the twenty-first century—only 32 years away—if we cannot provide sufficient open areas for passive, restful, mind-and-spirit-building recreation.

My county was 139 years old when North and South Parks were authorized by the then Board of County Commissioners in 1927.

Perhaps this will be more understandable if you consider that well into the twentieth century our steel workers worked a 12-hour day, seven days a week. Obviously, providing for their leisure time was a somewhat academic consideration. Of course, a six-day week and the nine o'clock Saturday night store closing are not too far in the past whether you're in Allegheny County or other parts of the country.

I refer to these facts of the past both to explain our recreational deficit and for their significance in what we can expect and must provide for in the future.

Another 37 years passed before steps were taken toward additional acreage although the population was then in excess of one million, five hundred thousand. A former County Commissioner who is now the head of the Pennsylvania Economy League interested our three Mellon Family Foundations in acquiring land which was later turned over to the county at cost. This became the start of our present Regional Park System.

Even in the years between 1955 and 1958, during which 3,600 acres was acquired, getting and holding open spaces was not easy.

It was not until the Federal Open Space Program made 50 per cent funds available to us as one of six cooperating Southwest Regional counties that we were able to project a system which might become adequate to our needs. Now, we find that whereas we were once urged to file for additional acreage acquisition there are signs that the well may be going dry with problems of today and tomorrow still unsolved. Our own Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has had a matching program which, too, has made progress possible in a most substantial way.

We have designed a system of regional parks which are located on or near a traffic route known as the Orange Belt which circles the City of Pittsburgh at a radius of 15 miles. When completed, this park system will give all residents of our industrial area a county-managed park located no more than 20 to 30 minutes of their home no matter where they live in Allegheny County.

They are designed for high density usage with low maintenance cost. Three are now open for public use.

However, with a 1960 census population of over one million, six hundred thousand persons, Allegheny County should have a minimum of 16,000 acres of regional park land to satisfy the accepted standard of 10 acres per 1,000 persons.

Regional park ownership at present is 5,100 acres. Planned acquisition for the immediate future would bring the total for nine park sites to about 8,300 acres.

Even with the inclusion of the original North and South Parks (4,247 overcrowded acres) the maximum will be about 12,500 acres or a deficiency of 3,500 acres, assuming that we are able to carry out our present plans.

Excluding North and South Parks, which, save for their size, do not qualify in their present over-developed state as regional parks, the deficiency is 7,700 acres.