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## LET US PLAN FOR PEOPLE

Julius Isaacs

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Disasters like the recent plane crashes at Elizabeth, New Jersey, and Jamaica, New York, immediately raise our blood pressure. Public hues and cries decry bad past planning and demand drastically better new planning. Here are to-day's warnings that unless we plan well we have to pay again and again for the mistakes of the past.

Careless planning permits high buildings, towers and other obstructions within a radius which may reasonably be expected to interfere with the operation of an airport. Zoning of the territory surrounding airports must afford space for proper landing and taking off of planes. As larger and heavier planes are employed, restricted areas surrounding airports must be enlarged to permit landing and taking off of these planes at narrower or more acute angles. We must preserve the air within the triangle of that flight line so that no structural hindrances will invade it. This is true planning. We spend millions on it. We respond slowly but surely to editorial demand for new zoning amendments, new traffic commissions and new building restrictions. Expansion of the police power for these purposes is easily accepted.

But there is an even more important planning—less readily accepted: planning for people. We have attacked that problem with some success with better housing, better food and better medicine; but this is not enough. These things do not take the place of direct planning—planning that will make people happier, healthier and more crime-proof. Of this kind of planning we only occasionally get a glimpse in the press which reports conferences where wise oratorical gestures are made and little is done. The use of words as symbols has great fascination. But words must be linked up with law, with morals, with religion, and especially with action. Language will light up the miracle of human capacity. But knowing the truth of that miracle is not enough.

It is useless to demand that action follow ideas immediately, for we cannot forget that man's road from savagery to civilization has been

a long one, punctuated by many ideas and often long delayed resultant acts. These ideas and actions mainly chart man's struggles to conquer nature. Even a more thrilling story is man's struggle to conquer himself. A miracle it has been and there are further miracles ahead which will be aided by the kind of planning we need.

Another recent disaster—the cruel murder of Arnold Schuster in New York City—led a group, calling itself the Borough Park Citizens' Committee, to tour the neighborhood in a sound truck calling on all to "Help find the killer of Arnold Schuster." It was shooed away by a patrolman guarding the family who were sitting "shivah," mourning for the dead.

The disasters at Elizabeth and Jamaica are in part the result of bad physical planning. The Schuster tragedy brings into the glare of public attention the fact that our planning for people needs to be re-examined in the light of our social and psychiatric needs.

The airplane tragedies help point up the need for further physical advances. Will the Schuster killing help us better to assess the need for an affirmative program in human planning? Or rather, will restrictive cries for vengeance against all offenders retard rather than promote our aims? There is as much danger in spasmodic reactions to the pressure of immediate events as from the realm of vague, high-minded talk.

Strange to say, it is science rather than social awareness or even religion that has done the more in this field of human planning. For it is science that has reassured us that, indeed, we are our brothers' keepers. During the past half century science has led us a long way toward the elimination of the great catastrophe of premature death. The tragedy of destitution has become exceptional in some parts of the world. These experiences give us hope that these objectives may some day be absolute and be the forerunner of greater social forces which will provide even greater insight into the problem. Science has shown us that in its field what was once considered impossible is at least possible. We can now hope that the diseases of drug addiction and of chronic alcoholism will some day be as rare as yellow fever.

The optimist who labors in the field of human relations is fed on such hopes. Such optimists are not scared off by accusations of softness. However, we must not push too far the analogy between the advances in the physical sciences and those in the sociological area. Human freedom dictates a moral responsibility that is much too flexible to be cast into exact rules of conduct. But the recognition of that fact alone is knowledge and very useful knowledge.

Up to comparatively recently, the essentially external or environmental factors have been the successful concern of physical science. Here planning has been moving quite apace. It is to the soul of the individual that we have as yet failed to X-ray the road.

It may still be true that some crime doctors are living in an age when calomel and blood letting were the standard remedies for almost every ailment. Just as medicine has rejected this simple analysis and has by more complicated means given us better remedies, so the simple blood letting stage in criminal science has almost become part of history.

We have moved far from the olden times when a hog was found guilty of a crime in the courts of France and was pardoned by the King because of its youth. The old cliché that children and lunatics alone must be exempted from punishment on the ground that neither can measure pain and pleasure intelligently was thus ridiculously carried over to this lowly grunting, speechless animal, in an early abortive attempt to pause with inquiring mind on the threshold of criminal responsibility.

In criminology, too, planning has until recently, been mostly on the physical side. Lombroso, the 19th Century positivist, insisted that all criminals were born with physical marks of criminal predisposition. So he measured skulls and jawbones. Charles Goring exploded the Lombrosian theory. Criminals as well as law-abiders were found to have the same kind of jaws. Warden Osborne as a volunteer prisoner in Auburn could not be recognized by his friends because of his prison garb and prison haircut. Army draft tests proved him correct. In spite of this inescapable conclusion many people, aided and abetted by newspaper cartoonists, still persist in the outmoded theory.

However, Lombroso made a great contribution by studying types first hand. For the first time criminals as people became more important than crime, leading justice to study men through individual case examination. Only poor technique led Lombroso to wrong statistical conclusions.

After that, interested people started to make studies of crime populations, sex, age, home life, education, institutional history, job experience and family relief experience. But what are we to do with all these statistical factors—some of our current tools in planning for people?

Knowledge of these facts helps us share more of the responsibility for conditions that create crime. We must care a lot to make any impression in the struggle against anti-social conduct. We must care as

much for individual people as for society at large. In successive periods, worry about public security has alternated with concern for the individual criminal. Every lawmaker immediately turns to the law for greater severity in times of stress, and prosecutors step to political success by sensational prosecutions. Periodic scares are useless.

Meredith said "The debts we owe ourselves are the hardest to pay." He used "debt" in the sense of Polonius' exhortation "To thine own self be true." These psychological bombshells are equally true of individuals as of society.

Has there been a backsliding in ethical standards among the American people? Is there more "gimme" psychology than before? These phenomena certainly shift from time to time and from people to people. While there is some backsliding the general direction is certainly forward. If this were not so we would not be so outraged at the discovery of the anti-social conduct. Just now, we are much concerned with political immorality. Dishonest, cynical, dirty people are robbing the governmental tills and we are not satisfied that we have heard fully the ramifications of these nefarious practices.

The Kefauver Senate Crime Investigating Committee brought into recent focus too dramatically to some, the relationship, of politics and crime. It was a national police lineup, and television has brought the lineup right into our homes effectively. But crime has always been connected with politics. In the effort to dispose of Caesar the right boys had to be lined up for the historic rub out. The gangster of long ago has been glamorized by history and the distance of history leaves them with little bad aroma clinging to them. Robin Hood, Sir Henry Morgan and the Roman stiletto wielders were no better than the Adonises and Costellos of our own gang empires. History may do as much for our own anti-social leaders.

The sinister charge that every man has his price has always been leveled at local and national political gangsters with equal vehemence. Tin boxes, judgeship payoffs, red envelopes and political favors add great justification to the accusation. Deep freeze boxes on the national scene, tin ones in the local area must have had their Roman counterparts.

Dedication to public service is endless and thankless. It is something dirty mouths talk about. But in doing so they desecrate the words they use and the air that carries them. They make the sensitive writhe in agony when the pontificating phonies vibrate the public platform with alleged efforts to destroy the local crooked machine, all the while thinking of what plum they can offer to the currently denounced boss

so as to protect their own political position and to avoid the possibility that another hoodlum may spill the political beans which may land them both in jail.

The standard of public life must be raised. Walter Lippmann said in the *New York Herald Tribune* on March 17, 1952, "Our people are better than the shysters who humiliate us and dishonor us, and our people are entitled to something a lot better than what they are getting." But how are we to achieve the better city, the better city government and better citizenship?

Our solution lies partly in the realm of politics, the art of the attainable—politics the point of compromises. The dynamo that will carry us forward rests in better citizenship. There are too many examples of what better citizenship can achieve to justify our remaining cynical about its powers. With it all is attainable and nothing is impossible.

The ethical standards and attitudes of the group in which we live have a decisive influence on this problem. When dishonesty is prevalent, individuals are dishonest. Income tax evasion is catching. Mass hypocrisy in our social, religious and economic life is the fertile soil of crime.

The cell upon which to work is the local area. We must start on the path of improvement in small town as well as in large city. The Athenian's Ephebic oath "to transmit this city not only not less but greater" is an admonition we take well to heart. We have, in part, already taken it to heart, for we are educating our youth better and we are educating more of them. With standards of excellence before him, the new citizen is bound to react more intelligently to the problems that beset him. More and more he has a greater and greater stake in exercising his prerogative as an active participant in local government. The town pavement is as important as the road to international peace.

Higher taxes which impinge on his activities at every turning make it imperative for Mr. Citizen to have opinions about what goes on in his government. With better educational equipment he must respond more intelligently in the local as well as in the national arena.

Isn't it every generation that thinks it is going to the dogs? The world is not going to the dogs. To that extent I am an incurable optimist. Our forefathers' predictions of such dire consequences have not eventualized, and we, too, can discount the present lamentations and leave the hungry dogs to wait many more generations for their doubtful legacy.

I am optimist enough to believe that our successive young generations

are also not going toward that same gloomy animal fate. Our main concern is with today, for the present only is dynamic. The future is unpredictable and the past too inscrutable. There are many pasts for there are many people and the past of the dead is usually buried. The essence of the past is too difficult for any but the true artist to communicate and there have been too few real artists to communicate to us the essence of the past with which to compare the present.

Better citizenship, the better city and the better government belong to youth. It is only youth that has the courage freshly to examine old methods and old moral clichés. Youth is not afraid to speak its mind and make decisions that are based on questioning. They hate stale slogans. They will substitute examination for the blind habits of lethargy and fear. Older, tired minds and hearts find it easier to accept than to question. But youth will meet today's crises and meet them gallantly. Youth is the key.

Better local government requires a youthfully enthusiastic citizenry better educated in the machinery of government. Mr. Better Citizen is the consumer-taxpayer. He foots all the bills, the direct one like income tax, as well as the regressive one like real estate tax which he pays painlessly in rent. And he must shout when taxes go up and services down.

When taxpayers stop being perennial suckers, political gangsters and racketeers will be eliminated. Politics must be cleaned up, the vultures cleaned out and cleaner and better educated office holders installed. Respectable business men must not harbor them nor provide investment opportunities for these political hoodlums. Respectable real estate developments must not provide investment areas for big time gamblers, smugglers and water front racketeers.

The Kefauver Committee revealed the rich gangster and some of our respectable people as well in the light of video. All were brightly illuminated in this glare of mechanical publicity. To most of those fixed in fascination to the television set these represented crime, these publicized overlords, extravagantly dressed and living as they dress. There can be no dispute about the disgust that all honest citizens feel toward these boorish, arrogant and contemptuous big shots. With these we are not truly concerned in our planning.

For the "average" offender crime is a financial bust. It always leads to bankruptcy. If the offender does not understand the ethics he may at least be persuaded by the economics of the profession. Considering the dangers of the job, the certainty of eventual capture and imprisonment

the "earnings" are very poor indeed. This "average" criminal offender is insignificant and unspectacular. He looks as undistinguished as any other subway rider. He is a confused, troubled personality, breaking the law stupidly, ineptly. He is poor, can rarely afford a lawyer and is in the clutches of the law before he knows it and can only be retrieved to good citizenship if we do something about it. For him and those like him we maintain armies of police courts, prisons, probation and parole systems. These are worth while expenditures and we must continue to plan to fit the offender rather than the offense. To reclaim some of those who have stumbled into trouble, the cost can never be too great.

No steady advance is possible without broad civic leadership. Spontaneous development and the action of social forces will not give us the leadership that our society requires. Our training here must be deliberate and planned. Leadership does not necessarily mean pre-eminence or superiority in any field. Great poets, great scientists, great teachers, great lawyers may or may not be leaders. Conversely it is not always true that those occupying positions of leadership are in fact leaders. Many places of leadership are filled by mediocrity. There is indeed no surplus of leadership.

Leadership affirmatively requires the highest kind of executive responsibility. The leader must be persuasive in example, as well as in argument. Here again we must look to youth. First we must know how to select a reservoir of youthful talent out of which real leadership may be discovered. This reservoir must be imbued with a real incentive for leadership, an incentive of service rather than of material success. This requires a high degree of caring and is a problem of moral education. The English civil service system where planned training begins very low in the scale of public service and ends up at the very top, affords us an example to emulate.

Also leadership does not grow out of any kind of experience. Many able business executives venturing late in life for the first time into public administration find it extremely difficult to become real leaders in the community. They have been educated for a special kind of leadership. Education for community leadership must start much earlier than it now does. It must begin in the school, and experience must be afforded for training in government itself in order to enable leaders to make correct and prompt decisions which will release the lid of governmental indecision. The public must not be left waiting for decisions until citizens lose all interest in good causes. There must be projects afoot and leaders must keep them moving.

These causes must not always be popular ones. Good leadership will keep both the popular and the unpopular moving. Such leadership, trained to a proper standard of values and to a capacity to influence conduct will be top flight leadership. It will be reasoned, not expedient, trained and not emotional.

Such leaders need a broad liberal education, not necessarily formal college or even graduate training. As important as this training is, the real importance is in methods of thinking, methods of inquiry and ability to form practical judgments about men and events. Such continued education will produce our leaders who will have been stirred to continue examining the disciplines which are the sum total of our culture. Most important, after such examination a willingness to change must develop—to change with the times when social and economic alterations represent civilized advances. The real leader will see these changes coming and strike for them when the need arises.

And the need for leadership is greatest in the field of planning for people. Most penological thinkers believe that the modern psychotherapeutic approach, working with enlightened social services, offers the greatest hope. This approach will start in watching children, considering acts in excess of naughtiness first coming to the attention of neighbors and teachers, then to police attention arising out of juvenile offenses. These variances must be properly measured and handled. It is in critical moments that we must be prepared to help the child as well as the adult. Help must also be ready upon release from prison or reformatory. The test of accomplishment is in the degree of recidivism. It is much too high and to that extent some of our planning is bad. The discharged prisoner, weak to begin with, must be given support and treatment after discharge, so that he may not crack again.

In all this our efforts must be to treat the "ordinary" lawbreaker. He need not be coddled—certainly not vindicated. Our obligations are too great to avoid attaching proper responsibility for criminal acts. The alternatives are not "powder puff" and "machine gun" penology. Our planning partners must coordinate their master planning against crime, not competing with each other with mutually exclusive claims.

Hidden streams of goodness in almost every character, more than the cruelty of punishment, will produce an antitoxin that will destroy many of the elements of social illness. The objective case worker has as his first concern society's protection. He believes in reforming those capable of rehabilitation and he is prepared also to isolate and confine the confirmed criminal.

In our complicated and cruel society—cruel to those who have succumbed to guilt because of human weakness—the great shining hope is that somewhere along the line of misfortune (often erroneously labeled criminality) there is likely to be a friend, a welfare worker, a physician, or a judge, who, incurable optimist that he is, will stop humbly by the roadside to reflect that human souls are important, that human possibilities are limitless, and that personalities are not always broken beyond repair by a struggle with the criminal law.

There are no cities without people. Better homes, better roads and better planning, are important only if they make people better and happier. The Ephebic oath never to “desert our suffering comrades in the ranks,” “to quicken the public’s sense of civic duty” and to transmit a more beautiful city can have meaning only in terms of people. We must plan for both.