

1.

Introduction

THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN GENEROUSLY ENDOWED with a rich and varied supply of land resources. These resources and the manner in which they are used constitute an important basis for our wealth, continuing prosperity and well-being of the Nation. This importance of land resources, together with the increasing scope of public control and influence over land utilization, invites careful study and appraisal of land problems and the policies being used to lessen or remedy them. This appraisal should consider additional alternatives leading to an improved pattern of land utilization.

Prior to any appraisal of land problems, policies and future alternatives of action, the objectives to be achieved must be considered. These objectives have the triple role of helping:

(1) delimit land problems. Unless land policy objectives are delimited it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to determine major land problems—for problems arise within the gap between land use conditions being experienced and the objectives desired.

(2) appraise land policies. Unless objectives are outlined, it is difficult, if not impossible, to appraise land policies, since policies must be evaluated in terms of objectives to be achieved.

(3) develop alternatives of future action. Unless land policy objectives are determined, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to work out consistent and reliable alternatives of action for improving utilization of land resources.

In line with this reasoning, the next chapter is devoted to an

analysis of the objectives of land policies. Even though the task of establishing objectives to evaluate land problems and policies is extremely difficult, chapter two should stimulate further thinking into this important phase of land problems and policies research, education and action. The difficulty of the task is additional proof of the need for attempting to refine the direction in which land policies should be moving.

From an economic viewpoint land resources become important only when viewed in terms of satisfying the demands on them by people. Thus, chapter three on population trends, policies and problems is intended to stimulate studying of the factors and trends in population growth and distribution in an effort to help guide resource utilization in terms of people and their wants.

Chapter four turns attention to the farm land resources of the United States. Chapter five discusses the principles of land utilization—the guiding rules for using land for the satisfaction of human wants.

Since the supply of land as well as the demands on land and the application of land use principles vary with respect to kinds of use, the next six chapters discuss various kinds of land uses and the problems and policies peculiar to each. Farm lands, range lands, water resources, forest lands, recreational lands and use of land for wild life are discussed in these six chapters.

Inasmuch as land policies have been geared largely to family farms as the units of use of farm lands, special consideration is given to family farm problems and policies in chapter twelve.

Considerable proportions of lands used for wild life, recreation, forestry and grazing are in public ownership. The remaining portions of lands in these uses, plus practically all farm lands, are in private ownership. The public interest and private interests in using these lands often conflict. Hence, means must be provided for working out public land programs within the general framework of private property. This presents one of the most difficult problems in land use programs and policies. Chapter thirteen on public interests in the use of private lands discusses this problem and indicates some alternatives of action. Chapter fourteen includes a discussion of the process of planning the use of land resources and chapter fifteen discusses land programs in a policy framework. Finally, chapter sixteen summarizes the ideas presented in the preceding chapters and makes certain suggestions for building a land policy.

The viewpoints of more than a dozen students of land problems and policies are given in this volume. Frequently, these viewpoints are not in agreement. These apparent disagreements and various points of view expressed should help stimulate thinking on land

problems and policies by other students. A selected list of references following each chapter was prepared by the various authors for those students desiring further information on each topic.

The editors feel that the information and viewpoints presented in this book will contribute materially to a critical study of land problems and policies. From such study should come a better understanding and appreciation of our major land problems and policies. Also, from such study should come further ideas and suggestions for clarifying our land problems and for working out the needed solutions.

