

Call Number: 02-00-34

A Conference on the Future of Alaska Session – Higbee, Anchorage, AK (no date)

Summary created by: Jacob Metoxen

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Notes: Original on 7 inch reel, copy on CD

Higbee is discussing Alaska and the state's resources. He says Alaska's position would make it easier for Dick Cooley's policies to be implemented. He says one of the factors that would allow policies to be implemented is that 99% of Alaskan land is in some form of public ownership. This means that at the present moment Alaska has control over what is obviously the major economic attraction of the state. It's not the land itself, it's the great extent of the land that contains ores, products, and minerals. These things can be exploited. He says one of the problems today in the Lower 48 is the management of land carried out by small individuals without much capital. He says that in order to handle the task adequately, land must be managed to a much larger scale. He says if one were to look down on the landscape of the Los Angeles Basin, where one of the most rapidly growing places in the world is located, you might be surprised to note that right on the edge there are large open spaces that are a curious anomaly. If you investigate that land, you'll find 150 square miles on the edge of Los Angeles are in the management of a single corporation, the Irvine Ranch Corporation. There is pressure from bordering communities to begin their invasion of the land. The Irvine Corporation has responded to that pressure by organizing three new towns. The curious principle that Irvine has introduced to this process is that it is not selling any of its land. Irvine is leasing it to developers for a period of 75 years.

Higbee says that in this time people are so mobile and subject to change that the idea of anyone living in a community right now for their life isn't what it used to be. The average household now moves once in every five years. People are interested in the quality of the environment that the Irvine Company assures them. Higbee begins giving examples of how much people would pay for a 75 year lease. Some of the land is on the bay of Newport Beach. Some of the small lots on that bay are leasing for \$100,000 for the 75 years. After 75 years, whatever is built on that land can be removed. Higbee calls this the Irvine principal. It means that there is evidence in one of the most rapidly growing metro areas, a willingness to accept environmental quality, excellence of public service, in exchange for fee simple ownership. IT also means that this land can be recovered as a large unit 75 years from now and reorganized in accordance with that time. It also means that lifestyles that will develop in 75 years can be accommodated in so far as the physical environment. What the Irvine Principle opens up is that there can be erasable landscapes. In the foreseeable future when everything now erected will have been amortized and can be completely reorganized and rebuilt. This would induce new architecture, Kleenex architecture. There wouldn't be great investment in architecture designed for permanence. There wouldn't be the Roman attitude of building with stone forever. There would be an attitude of building for temporary periods for what we own and value today. We would be capable of altering the

urban landscape. If this is so, then the very nature of land is changing. Land might possibly not be considered a commodity, as something to be bought and sold. The land would serve as a public utility whose primary service will be to figuring out to what extent land could contribute to the vitality to what institutions might for a period be investing and occupying that land. It would make possible a flexible response in changes of demand for more effective economic development. This kind of land management would call for a different type of organization. We now see new towns. Higbee says there are currently 75 new towns being constructed at this time in the Lower 48. Who are the sponsors? Gulf Oil, Humboldt Oil, Keyser Aluminum, Alcoa, Goodyear. The Connecticut General Insurance Company is building the city of Columbia, Maryland between Washington D.C. and Baltimore. Obviously the corporations have the capital and the interest in community building. They may consider community to be one of the greatest investment opportunities for corporations in the future. The corporations are not operating on the Irvine Principal but are operating on the fee basis by developing and selling. For the most part the major investors are holding the commercial lands. Higbee says there is a possibility, here in Anchorage, of large capital accumulators coming in and buying land with the expectations that they can clear and renew those areas and put them in higher use. The most effective capital gainers are the insurance companies and pension funds. Gradually they are coming into the picture of the Lower 48. The same kind of institution could be applied to state, federal, or tribal lands. The state could grant franchises, giving them monopoly rights for development, but under subjects of controls and limitations with the expectation that the franchises would live up to the stipulation of the agreements. The public community must make very substantial investments to any kind of urban development. To the south there are other opportunities for solving the same problems, that is time zoning instead of use zoning. In the south, we could change our zoning regulations to indicate to all small land owners that they could use those lands only for a certain time period. When those time periods were up, whole blocks of land had to be subject to new options. What Higbee is finding is that commitments that are made today are becoming obsolete later. Some means must be provided for opening up large blocks of land to new uses at a future time. Higbee has found that the problem of urban renewal on the present basis is both inadequate and expensive. The patterns of layout and physical development must follow the functions for which that land should be utilized. The functions follow patterns in lifestyle and development.

Higbee begins to use examples of Native tribes' use of lands. He says the Native approach to the use of land. He talks about at Spenard Lake there is the world's largest sea plane base for private planes. He says Mr. Eaton told him that 1 out of 5 people in Alaska has a pilot license and 1 out of 8 owns a plane. He says that planes are the modern blanket toss. He says that planes are the electronic decedent of the Native blanket toss. Higbee highlights that the tribes exploit resources from land but never destroy the environment. Higbee says it is possible to exhaust local resources and then care could be taken to make sure the local landscape isn't polluted. Higbee says there are parallels between the way Native tribes use their land and the ways in which a modern corporation might also manage the land systems of the state, shifting exploitation from place to place, but always maintain some kind of executive locale. Higbee believes this is function of great cities in the modern world. Now that the world is becoming a worldwide network, the function of cities such as Anchorage and Juneau is to tie into the worldwide system. These places can be used and developed without permanent destruction of Alaskan landscape. In terms of the trends that now seem apparent, the urban industrial natures are finding that

employment in agriculture and manufacturing are diminishing in terms of total populations. The employment is being taken over by technological advancements. In the U.S. only 5% of the population is engaged in agriculture compared to 70% that were engaged in agriculture 100 years ago when the Homestead Act was put into effect. Of the 5% involved in agriculture, 2% produce 87% of our agricultural produce. Higbee asks where people are to be employed. The change is an increasing employment in design and management in the urban world. This is the apparent and important function of our cities in the future. This is a new system. Land no longer is a satisfactory source of public revenue. Higbee says if land is no longer used a public commodity, then it should no longer be viewed as a public basis of taxation.

Higbee begins speaking about education at 29:00 of the recording. He says talent is the product of the kind of educational system that has been developing in America. The system has been primarily financed by taxes on property. Higbee says it seems inconsistent that localities through the taxation of property should bear the great burden of producing talent that is then heavily taxed by the federal government that has no responsibility on the local level. Higbee says in summary that Alaska's resources are locally exhaustible, but statewide inexhaustible for the reason that Alaska prospects for inanimate energy production can only be brighter in time through hydroelectric projects, through the discovery of fossil fuels, and through the employment of nuclear energy. And the fact that technological potential seems infinite as generated by Alaskan educational system. This is where the University of Alaska becomes important because of the function of the research systems to advance the intellectual and talent level of populations. These universities act as nodes in the world wide university system. Any person involved in the university is not just associated with their department; they are involved worldwide with the events in their field. The university system is part of a subsystem of any system which acts as a node of the worldwide globalized system of the time. The technological potential is infinite because of the inputs of private research and development and the coordination of the private research. Higbee says it seems that we are emerging from a 10,000 year old agrarian interlude. The recording stops. [Note: the remaining portion of the discussion can be found on recording 02-00-41].

This agrarian interlude warped, changed, and diverted our minds and established values of only temporary validity. These values valued the rugged individualist rather than the cooperative society. The agrarian view saw wealth as limited, tangible, and fixed and that it should be the basis of government taxation. Higbee says Alaska has a remarkable opportunity to produce dividends from natural resources. Higbee says opportunities lie in the ability to innovate as John Aberheart [?] was saying yesterday.