REGIONAL SCIENCE CURRICULA AND TEACHING

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Our concern with the regional and urban aspects of current social and economic problems has greatly intensified over the past two decades, resulting in a proliferation of programs that stress regional and urban development. An emphasis on positive action presupposes a knowledge of these problems along with the "brain-power" necessary to formulate and implement the programs designed to deal with the problems. Such presuppositions imply an academic involvement, since academic institutions are the primary place where we accumulate knowledge and, in terms of this knowledge, provide people with much of the equipment necessary to deal with problems. Thus, if our concern with a particular set of problems is intensified, we would expect an academic response.

Those of us interested in urban and regional problems are aware of the fact that there has been an academic response which is reflected in the increased visibility of regional and urban concerns both in the curricula and in the academic institutions in which there is organized research and development activities on the part of the faculty (e.g., institutes, centers, etc.). Precisely what has been the nature of this response? And what do we think about it? Are we doing the things we should? What kind of curricula do we find emerging in what schools? Do we really know enough to warrant the expense of treating urban and regional problems separately in the classroom? How do these courses fit in with the rest of the curricula? In what departments should they be housed? Do they really provide us with the opportunity to get students involved? If so, how can we best accomplish this involvement?

The program committee for the 1970 annual meetings of the Southeastern Regional Science Association decided that it would be both timely and interesting to organize a session on Regional Science Curricula and Teaching. Papers were solicited from people with no particular overall design in mind; rather an attempt was made to include people who were actively engaged in an academic enterprise with a regional concern. The intent was to assemble a group of people, who by virtue of their exposure to the difficulties involved in establishing regional and urban programs, could be expected to hold some rather strong views about what should be involved in such programs. As it turned out, the papers submitted provided a design in which they could be neatly organized.

Initially, Professor Schaffer talks about the results of his survey of the teaching activities of regional scientists in which he tried to find out who was doing what and where. From Schaffer's paper, we get an overview of what in fact had been the nature of the academic response to the apparent increased need for more knowledge and skills concerned with aspects of our problems in urban and regional development. In Professor Pfister's paper, we find many interesting details about the development of a particular academic program that to date has met with considerable success. Professor Nourse, on the other hand, is concerned with the question of the essential ingredients of what we should be teaching students no matter where it is taught. His specific concern is with the structuring of a sequence of courses concerned with the economic aspects of urban and regional development, and he makes plainly evident his inclination for a curricula in which we find a conceptual framework which provides the consistence required in analysis and at the same time has applicability to a wide range of phenomena. To this writer, Nourse

takes us a long way in his efforts to fashion such a framework. Finally, in the paper of Professor Steiss, we find the matter dealt with in a somewhat different way. Steiss is a planner who is concerned with generating the input into an academic program that will provide our future regional and urban planners with the equipment needed to meet the demands that will be placed on them. What should these inputs be? Professor Steiss has some strong views about the matter.

One will not find all curricula and teaching are taken up in these four papers; nor is it likely that one will agree in all instances with the viewpoints expressed about those which are discussed. Yet, this much is clear: much interesting ground is covered on matters that are genuinely important to the regionalist, matters that all too seldom get any kind of public hearing.