

AICP STUDY GUIDE

Episode 19: Vital Internal Problems

And welcome, to the 19th episode of the VERY UNofficial AICP Study Guide Podcast. I'm Jonathan Miller and thank you so much for joining.

I hope everyone got a little R&R over the weekend; maybe watched the Super Bowl and over-rated Tom Brady. I wish both teams could've lost, but whatever. Should've been my Brownies.

Anyways, I want to give you all a reminder: the expedited review window for the planning experience essays is now open. And that window will be open until the 16th at 3:00 PM, at which point it turns into the regular review window. It's just like Cinderella, only its 3:00 PM instead of midnight and the expedited turns to just regular. POOF!

So, last episode we covered The New York Tenement House Act of 1901 which finally banned tenements; at this stage it was the dumbbell tenement. We talked about the subsequent New York Committee on Congestion of Population and how they hired Benjamin Marsh as the executive secretary, and we talked about his contributions by organizing the first conference on city planning: the 1909 National Conference of City Planning and Congestion of Population. And, we also talked about his book - the first American book on city planning - "An Introduction to City Planning: Democracy's Challenge and the American City."

This week, we're pivoting back to the west. We last left off - in Episode 14 - with the General Land Law Revision Act which gave the POTUS the power to create forest preserves, the Forest Management Act which gave some control of the use of the forest preserves to the Department of the Interior, and we talked a little about our environmentalist friends John Muir and Gifford Pinchot, and their contributions as the founder of the Sierra Club (that's John Muir) and the first Chief Forester of the US Department of Ag (and that would be Gifford Pinchot).

But, the stage for this episode was really set back in Episode 12 when we talked about John Wesley Powell and his 1878's Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States. It was that report that talked about how the west could be settled and conserve water sources. Powell knew that the dry, arid west would be difficult to settle, and well, he was right.

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Before the U.S. Reclamation Act of 1902, the west was dry, really dry - like these lands will never be properly settled kind of dry - and to one Mr. Teddy Roosevelt, that wasn't going to fly. In fact, in 1901 - after he was elected - one of his messages to Congress was that problems with water and forests were perhaps the most vital internal problems of the United States.

Sorry, let's take a step back for a second to recap for you. John Wesley Powell - our exploration friend - wrote in 1878, "The Report on the Lands of the Arid Regions of the United States." Now, this report was important because it basically said that the west was never going to be able to be developed like the east. Why you ask?

Well, he noticed that the region was really dry, but after the winters the snow melt from the mountains and the rainy spring seasons would flood the waterways. So, to be in sync with the natural resources, any

development of the west would have to follow the watersheds; and it would have to be for small, limited settlements with communal irrigation systems.

Now, back to 1903. In the west, some smaller farms and communities had managed to make irrigation work for their low-key agricultural efforts. Simultaneously, the US Government saw this and said, "hrmmmm, what if we could ramp this son bitch up. Then, we could do way more farmin'." So, Mr. Francis Newland - a state rep for Nevada - put together some legislation to make that happen, and BOOM! The US Reclamation Act was born.

And what did this Reclamation Act do? Wait, sorry, one more digression. This act apparently goes by many names. So just so you know, if you see any of these, it means US Reclamation Act of 1902. We got the main one - the US Reclamation Act of 1902 - then you have the Lowlands Reclamation Act of 1902, or the Newlands Reclamation Act (after the representative that initiated it, Francis Newland), and of course - for funsies - the full name:

An Act appropriating the receipts from the sale and disposal of public lands in certain States and Territories to the construction of irrigation works for the reclamation of arid lands.

So, what did it do again?

Well, it appropriated the receipts from the sale and disposal of public lands in certain states and territories to the construction of irrigation works for the reclamation of arid lands. In all seriousness though, it basically established fees from the sale of government land, and those fees were earmarked for the purpose of building dams on the western rivers. The idea was that by creating these dams and creating a large body of water, we could make even larger irrigation projects so the whole damn west could be farmed and settled.

And, just to let you know the full impact of these projects? Well, apparently, about 10 million acres of farmland have been created by the reclamation projects, and this includes 60% of the vegetables in the US, and 25% of fruits and nuts. Oh, and don't forget the 58 power plants.

So, the US Reclamation Act was going to do all these projects on the proceeds from the sale of federal lands. Cool, great, grand, wonderful. But at this time, there was also some huge concerns over the mismanagement of the public lands.

So, our friend - the POTUS Teddy Roosevelt - went to Congress to ask them to put together a committee. But, congress wasn't receptive, so using his super President powers, he put together his own commission. And with , the Public Lands Commission of 1903 was formed.

The three members of the commission were our conservationist friend - the Chief of the Bureau of Forestry - Gifford Pinchot, the Chief Engineer of the newly minted Reclamation Service - Frederick Newell - and heading it all up - the Commission of the General Land Office - W.A. Richards.

(7:34)

So, what did this commission do? Well, since Congress refused to fund any of their work, each member used their respective staff and resources to tour the public lands, hold meetings, talk to officials and residents. And eventually, in 2 reports - one in 1904 and one in 1905 - provided a list of recommendations.

Two of the recommendations included these reports were - ahem - a repeal of the forest lieu provision of the Forest Service's Organic Act of 1897. This allowed homesteaders to basically select other unsurveyed lands in lieu of their claims in the reserve, and the establishment of grazing districts on public lands and charging ranchers fees for using these districts, which was eventually done in 1934.

Both of these - and most of the recommendations for that matter - were geared towards eliminating the corruption in the program, but Congress for the most part didn't take these recommendations seriously or incorporate them for that matter.

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But what about the waterways? Remember, Roosevelt said the waterways were a vital internal problem as well. And in 1907, he followed up on that by asking Congress to create a commission to look at the transportation crisis that was going on.

You see, around this time a lot of the industrial transportation had shifted to railroads, but the railroad capacity constructed under the private sector just wasn't enough. In the decade leading up to this Commission, production in northern states doubled, but capacity of the railroads increased only 12%. Now based on the simple laws of supply and demand, the cost to ship via railroads went up. High demand for shipping combined with low supply for shipping meant it cost 7 to 10 times more to ship through the railroads than it did the waterways.

But even still, the railroads were carrying 8 times more than the waterways; and that was the transportation crisis. And according to Roosevelt, the railroads were no longer able to move crops and manufactures rapidly enough to secure the prompt transaction of the business of the Nation, and there appears to be but one complete remedy: the development of a complementary system of transportation by water.

So, Roosevelt initiated the formation of the Inland Waterways Commission in 1907, and their task was to study the waterways in all capacities. I mean, it was initiated on the basis of declining commercial navigation, but Roosevelt was a conservationist after all. So the commission was also charged with looking at the waterways in terms of conservation as well; and the Commission delivered. One of the outcomes from the commission was a plan for a national conservation conference. The main recommendation though was the formation of a comprehensive policy for water resources from an independent commission of experts, but that one didn't happen.

(11:12)

So, I think the big takeaway here is Teddy Roosevelt did a lot in the early 1900's for conservation. So, if you run into a question about conservation or natural resources as it relates to the president? It's probably good old T.R., though it was usually in combination with something economic.

To recap his contribution though, Teddy Roosevelt saw the economic benefits of the west and acknowledged that it would never be developed without a little push. So, he encouraged the formation of the U.S. Reclamation Act - AKA the Newlands Reclamation Act - so aptly named for the representative who proposed it.

It was this act that is essentially responsible for damn near every - you guessed it - dam in the west, and all the subsequent irrigation that the dams made possible. A year later, in 1903, he created the Public Lands Commission to look at all the corruption that was going on in the west regarding the sale of federal lands because it wasn't being conserved the way it should have. Congress pretty much ignored those.

In 1907, he gave another commission - the Inland Waterways Commission - to look at waterway transportation since the railroads in the private sector were falling short in providing adequate movement of freight. Their mission ultimately expanded to include some conservation stuff as well, although their recommendations largely got ignored too.

It did however, ultimately result in the creation of a conservation conference. So, at least they did that.

(12:58)

Well, thanks again for joining me! We really have just got off and running.

If you have any questions about the material, the exam, the meaning of life, feel free to reach out to me at theveryunofficialAICPstudyguide@gmail.com, and I'll do my best to help out if I can; except for the meaning of life thing. I still can't figure that one out.

If you're playing along at home, our question last week was, "Where - and in what year - was the first National Conference on City Plan held? If you said 1909 in Washington D.C., you'd be right. Congrats!

If you want to give this week a go, our question is, "What was the purpose of the U.S. Reclamation Act of 1902?"

Anyways, don't forget to subscribe to this podcast on whatever platform you use for podcasts and feel free to sign up on the show's website so you can follow along with future episodes, help prepare for the exam and supplement all of your other study regimens. And if you're feeling saucy, share this out with any planners you know and leave a review too if you feel so inclined,

Next week we're going to cover some court cases, so it'll be super exciting. To be specific, we're going to hit the 1887 case of *Mugler v Kansas*, the 1896 court case *United States v Gettysburg Electric Railway*, and spoiler alert; that has to do with historic preservation. So, we might as well add in some Antiquities Act of 1906 to round it out.

Thanks again everyone, 'till next time

Links:

US Reclamation Act of 1902:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newlands_Reclamation_Act

https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/national_reclamation_act_1902_/#.YCF5--hKiUk

<https://www.theodorerooseveltcenter.org/Blog/Item/The%20Arid%20West%20The%20Newlands%20Reclamation%20Act%20of%201902>

Public Land Commission 1903:

<https://memory.loc.gov/gc/amrvg/vg57old/vg57.html>

<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5847&context=etd>

Inland Waterway Commission 1907:

<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-policy-history/article/abs/water-planning-in-the-progressive-era-the-inland-waterways-commission-reconsidered/F9D50E3B2F659B838003876906B95451>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inland_Waterways_Commission

<http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/outlines/history-1963/the-era-of-expansion-and-reform/roosevelt-acts-to-save-resources.php>

<https://amp.en.google-info.org/33981721/1/inland-waterways-commission.html>