

# WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENT IN MUNICIPAL ARBORICULTURE-URBAN FORESTRY?<sup>1</sup>

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The title "What Should Be the Role of State Government" invites an opinion. Opinions are subject to bias. My opinion is based on the experience of administering a state program in urban forestry. Thus, I am not without bias. I earnestly hope, however, that I am also not without objectivity.

If we accept as fundamental the idea that urban forests should serve people, then we must address the question of "how can they be made to best serve people." To address this question, we have to define who is ultimately responsible for management of the urban forest. Typically, the urban forest is managed by a myriad of public and private owners with city government having certain authority over all ownerships. This authority stems generally from police powers for the protection of public health, safety, morals, convenience and welfare. It allows for protection of the forest from fire, insects and disease, requires control of vegetative growth for public safety, and provides for certain other areas of management. This authority is usually exercised to the minimum possible extent but offers the only direct opportunity for management of the urban forest as a whole. Thus, management of the urban forest is primarily the responsibility of individual property owners with limited involvement by city government except on city-owned lands.

At this point, let's separate the management responsibility of city government from that of individual owners. I would first like to discuss the urban forestry role of state government as it relates to city government; and discuss later the role as it relates to individual owners.

In addressing this issue, I will draw heavily on my experience in my own state, and my limited

knowledge of situations in other states. In Kansas, two municipal arboriculture situations are common, particularly in smaller cities: 1) there is often little or nothing being done by city government; and 2) what is done is often done incorrectly. I believe it is a proper role of state government, in the public interest, to make these situations better. Stated another way, I believe the role of state government should be to help develop and support local municipal arboriculture programs.

I represent the Department of Forestry at Kansas State University. We are the official state forestry agency, with legislative authority for programs to enhance the total forest resource. In 1970, we surveyed the 628 incorporated cities in Kansas. We found that of the 618 cities of less than 25,000 population, not one had a comprehensive municipal arboriculture program, as evidenced by specific budgets or qualified personnel. Management was by crises — in response to storms, insect and disease outbreaks or other problems. And the quality of work in these situations was often atrocious (I expect that our situation is not dissimilar to other areas of the nation). Please note that I am talking about cities of less than 25,000 population. Some of the larger cities such as Wichita, Topeka and Manhattan had excellent programs.

In 1971, our department started a community forestry program aimed at helping cities develop their own municipal arboriculture programs. Our role is to promote program formation and to provide technical assistance necessary for development and project implementation. Specific activities include holding informational meetings, providing sample ordinances, fur-

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nishing information as to state enabling legislation, conducting tree inventories, helping define objectives, conducting training sessions, and suggesting alternatives for program implementation. Since 1971, 119 cities have developed comprehensive programs for planting, maintenance, and removal. Our program is partially described in the movie "The Urban Forest" which was shown earlier at this convention.

I believe it is also the proper role of state government to help make private owners and managers of the urban forest more knowledgeable. This is done by use of printed materials, communications media, demonstrations, schools and workshops, and individual contacts.

I think it has been clearly shown that state programs in urban forestry have had a positive influence on private industry. For example, the cities with which we have worked in Kansas have planted 30,000 trees (all purchased from private nurseries), have let 92 insect and disease control contracts, and have implemented 245 maintenance or removal projects (most by private firms). If this were not the case, I believe it would be clear evidence of an improper role of state government. I believe that state government's role in providing information and assistance to local managers of the urban forest carries with it the responsibility for accuracy, objectivity and impartiality. State government's role does not carry with it the responsibility (nor the right) to substitute the state urban forester's judgment of what ought to be done to the urban forest for the decisions of local managers. Rather, the state urban forester must make local managers aware of

alternatives so that they can make intelligent decisions.

State government also has a vital role, I believe, in urban forestry research. This is especially important in our complex urbanizing society. Much research applicable to urban forestry/municipal arboriculture is conducted at state universities. This is work that is not economic for individuals or local units of government, but is economic for society.

This is also the test, I believe, as to the proper role of state (and federal) government. In his book, "The Economics of Soil Conservation," Arthur C. Bunce (1945) suggested that social action (government involvement) to achieve conservation is desirable: 1) "when conservation is not economic for the individual but is economic for society; and 2) when intangible ends desired by the majority of the individuals in a society can be attained only by collective action". It seems to me we could paraphrase this by saying that state government programs in urban forestry are proper when such programs are not economic for individuals or local units of government but are economic for society; and when amenity ends desired by the majority of individuals can be attained only by collective action.

#### Literature Cited

Bunce, Arthur C., 1945. *The Economics of Soil Conservation*. Ames: Iowa State College Press.

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## ABSTRACT

Anonymous. 1976. **Detecting/controlling tree diseases and pests: oaks.** *Grounds Maintenance* 11(10): 32, 34, 38, 42, 44, 46.

The oaks constitute one of the world's most important and dependable groups of trees, both as timber trees and as ornamentals. More than 40 species of oak are listed as being commercially grown and offered for sale in the United States. Such pests as twig girdlers, borers, oak gall insects, and various leaf diseases prey on the oaks. In addition, oak wilt is a widespread and serious threat to black and red oaks in the north central United States. Other insect pests and diseases common to the oaks are discussed in this article along with their causes and controls. Tables 1 and 2 provide spray programs which might be utilized in serious cases.