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Excerpts of Remarks by
Dr. John P. Keith, President
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PLANNING EXECUTIVE CALLS LONG ISLAND SCHIZOID

Regional Plan Association Head Says Ambivalence of Purpose
Dooms Long Island to Urban Sprawl Without Benefits of Growth

"A wave of urbanization without urbanity has been surging along the length of Long Island since World War II. It has largely spent itself in Nassau County, and it is now cresting in Suffolk," Dr. John P. Keith, President of Regional Plan Association told Long Island executives today. "This bi-county area has received by far the largest share of the Region's out-moving or newly-locating industrial jobs over the past decade: two-thirds of all such jobs in the Region have settled on Long Island. Furthermore, there has been a following wave of office jobs still rolling into Nassau and Suffolk.

"When Regional Plan has been so presumptuous as to indicate that these employment waves and the accompanying population growth are largely spent in Queens, have reached their peak in Nassau and are rolling at full tide in Suffolk, many of our best friends out here respond in high dudgeon: 'It

isn't so for Nassau, all of Long Island continues to boom, and the welcome mat for business is out!' At the same time, there is a feverish opposition to multi-family dwellings, and most especially to high-rise apartments. There is also a growing opposition to highways, and most particularly to a bridge across the Sound to Westchester.

"Over the years, Regional Plan Association has participated with Long Islanders in creation of the Northern and Southern State parkways, Jones Beach and the Fire Island National Seashore, to name but a few of your accomplishments. But even a long-time good friend begins to look askance at your ambivalent, almost schizoid behavior, when you call for growth with one breath, and shout against all of its trappings with another. Most serious is the housing shortage on the Island, especially for low and lower-income families, most of whom are your own.

"Under those circumstances, it is doubtful that the trend can continue. Therefore, Regional Plan Association's message to Nassau and Suffolk Counties remains the same: either face up to the issues of urbanization or continue to despoil your landscape, reduce the quality of life here and have neither the advantages of the city or a semi-rural area.

"To a great extent Nassau County has made the decision and the time is rapidly fleeing when any course but the present is possible. By rejecting the potential of Mitchel Field as a center where office buildings, apartment housing, educational facilities, etc. can be located; they will spread over the remaining landscape. And spread they will--neither satisfactorily to the residents of Nassau who so oppose high-rise structures nor to the efficient operation of the County. Can anyone who reads Newsday and Long Island Commercial Review and their stories on the shennanigans of zoning believe that high-rise buildings will not appear when there is such a great demand and profit to be made? And, because Mitchel won't be used, they will dot the landscape.

"The result will be to continue the reliance on the car for all trips because the spread, low density pattern of development precludes any public transportation. Nassau residents already drive more miles in their automobiles than those in any other part of our Region. Purchasing all of the bus systems in Nassau County won't give you public transportation when everyone is coming from and going to a different destination.

"Take a look at the matter of the Sound crossing--and I do not plan to indicate a position on that issue at this time. The Long Island Association and other business leaders say it is needed and wanted. Almost universally, civic groups, conservationists and legislators say it is not needed and not wanted. And, so your State legislators vote against the bridge knowing that the Governor will veto their overthrow of the legislation.

"The Town of Brookhaven eagerly solicits the location of a major Post Office facility but refuses to rezone nearby land to enable the people who will work in that facility to live in the community.

"Housing to match the employment you would like to attract to both Nassau and Suffolk Counties is a major issue. Regional Plan Association estimates that 50,000 more moderate income housing units will be needed by 1985 to match the some 68,000 blue collar jobs that we believe might settle in the two counties between 1968 and 1985.

"There are many other examples of poor development and planning. There are, however, a few examples of more encouraging signs. The adoption of the Bi-County Plan by Suffolk is one. We see evidence of planned unit development, or cluster zoning, beginning to emerge in several towns, including here in Islip. We commend the MTA proposal for a transportation center at MacArthur Field and the efforts to improve service on the LIRR. But the negative development still outweighs the positive.

As business leaders with much at stake in the future of Long Island, Regional Plan Association hopes you will encourage these more promising developments. We stand ready to work with you, but there needs to be local concern and desire to do things differently."