



MELVIN G. COOMBS

Plymouth Dev. & Ind. Comm.

"Environmentalists should mind their own business. People are being misguided. They don't know what they're looking for." Strong words, but Mel Coombs, the executive secretary of the Plymouth (Ma.) Development & Industrial Commission, has the years and experience to know what he's talking about.

He came to Plymouth from Medford 25 years ago, spent five years revitalizing the Area Chamber of Commerce, and went into business for himself as a real estate agent.

Mel was born in Malden before the first World War and has taken many courses at area universities and colleges since graduating high school. A brief talk leads you to believe he was born in the nation's first town, but his first big test came when its only major industry, Plymouth Cordage, closed its doors in 1966. He spearheaded the effort to recover from that economic blow with a plan for recuperation and expansion of the town's economy. And he's still going strong.

He served in the U.S. Navy in the second World War and his real estate background was a strong suit in his current tasks. Mel launched the Plymouth Ind. Dev. Corp., a non-profit group which initiated a fund raising campaign and realized \$106,000 contributed by 350 citizens anxious to revitalize the town's industrial base.

This was followed by the establishment of a 120 acre industrial park, with the help of the U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Economic Dev. Admn., along Rte. 3 (the Southeast Expressway). The park houses nine industries in an area which once yielded just \$300 a year in taxes. And through Mel's efforts, a young investment team acquired Cordage Park and signed 28 firms occupying all but 13% of its 1.5 million sq. ft.

What is more important to Mel and the area is the 1,000 new jobs that have been created in the last 24 months alone. "The future looks bright for the inclusion of more new industry in Plymouth's economy," says Mel, while realizing that tourism is still one of the town's major industries.

"Boston Edison's decision to locate its Pilgrim Station nuclear plant here, with plans to build a second unit at the site, is a further indication of the economic growth of the town and has been conducive to increasing the tax base," Mel told us. But it has also brought much grief.

"The Atomic Energy Comm. knows what it's doing (referring to its recent decision to allow Edison to put the station back on the line) and scientists shouldn't question its opinions which have a lifetime of study and research behind them. They're making a big noise, but don't know what they're talking about."

One final jab, and Mel means it: "The people on planning boards, and zoning agencies are costing us money in delays. They are damn detrimental to business (they referring to environmentalists)."

A widower with three sons and daughter, Mel's joys are family love and companionship. He likes to go ski mobiling up in Goshen, N.H. where he owns a cottage.

He holds memberships in the Ma. I.D. Council, Northeast I.D. Assn., Associated Industries of Ma., and I.D. Committee of the New England Council. He's a former chairman of the Southeastern Reg'l. Planning & Econ. Dev. District and still represents the town on that board.