



Planning for Permanence: the Speeches of J.C. Nichols
[Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City](#)

Lewis H. Brown Dinner
Kansas City Club June 4, 1940

Public debt

1914 – \$66 per capita
1936 – \$440 per capita
700% increase.

Overall annual cost of government

1914 – 2.6 billion
1936 – 18 billion
700% increase

Overall public debt

1914 – 6.1 billion
1936 – 57 billion
950% increase

National income

1914 – \$36 billion
1936 – 60 billion
66% increase.

In business if our income increased 66% would we increase our living costs 700% and our debts 950%?

In 1860, all government expenses were \$5 per capita; now nearly \$150 per capita – 30 times as much.

Missouri state government costs have increased nearly 1000% in 24 years. Think of it! Comparisons to year 1940 would only be more hair-raising.

Our own city's financial plight today tells the same story.

With all this rapid increase how long can free enterprise continue? How long will any individual strive to earn? How long will our democracy survive?

Soon – very soon, will there be any real difference between Hitler's, Stalin's, and Mussolini's way of life and our own American way of living unless some check can be made in our mad, unthinking race to ruin – in our reckless waste of not only the earnings of our enslaved people but the possible nationalization of business and industry and ultimate confiscation of property itself! Will entrenched Bureaucrats become masters of us all?

Lewis H. Brown, our guest,
Creston Iowa,
Iowa University
Manufacturer of corrugated paper
Ft. Wayne, Ind. 2 years
In army two years, serving in France.
8 years Montgomery Ward

Became President Johns-Manville Co. at 35 years of age, 6 months before depression hit. Today 17 plants employing 12,000 men; and a young grandfather at 46 years of age; active in dozens of public, educational, and charitable causes.

Today he is chairman of Red Cross in N.Y. with \$3,000,000 to raise, and serving in many pressing movements, yet taking time to come to K.C. to tell us of the great and constructive work of the Tax Foundation of N.Y.

Mr. Brown, we business men of K.C. are immensely appreciative of your friendly unselfishness, and delighted to have you here to talk frankly to us on our common problems of taxation so fundamental to every man, woman and child in America.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) – Speech JCN063

Arguably Jesse Clyde Nichols (1880-1950) was the single most influential individual to the development of metropolitan Kansas City. Moreover his work, ideas, and philosophy of city planning and development had far-reaching impact nationally – so much so that the Urban Land Institute has established the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionary Urban Development to recognize a person or a person representing an institution whose career demonstrates a commitment to the highest standards of responsible development.

Nichols' objective was to “develop whole residential neighborhoods that would attract an element of people who desired a better way of life, a nicer place to live and would be willing to work in order to keep it better.” The Company under Nichols and his son, Miller Nichols (1911-), undertook such ventures as rental housing, industrial parks, hotels, and shopping centers. Perhaps the most widely recognized Nichols Company developments are the Country Club District and the Country Club Plaza Shopping Center, reportedly the first shopping area in the United States planned to serve those arriving by automobile rather than trolley car.

The J.C. Nichols Company Records (KC106) contains both personal and business files concerning J.C. Nichols' private and business life. Included are personal correspondence, family related material, and speeches and articles written by him. Business and financial files pertain to actions of the Company, including information about different developments and the securing of art objects; and printed materials produced by and about the Company.