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# LABOR AND TRAINING NEEDS OF RURAL AMERICA

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I would like to discuss some of the human dimensions involved in meeting the nation's manpower needs. Undoubtedly the most efficient way to meet these needs would be to dispatch workers to the places that have the greatest shortages and to train them in those occupations where workers are most in demand. But in a democratic society our purpose in promoting economic efficiency should be to improve the well-being of the citizen, and we cannot do this by sacrificing individual choice. Workers may be encouraged to follow courses of action that are supportive of national objectives regarding population distribution and occupational composition, but such decisions should ultimately be made by each individual and not by the state.

The Manpower Administration of the Labor Department is trying to assist rural workers in expanding the range of options available to them by eliminating the existing disparities in the quantity and quality of manpower services afforded rural, compared with urban, workers. This is the agenda for the Manpower Administration, but closer cooperation between the Labor Department and the land-grant colleges can be mutually advantageous.

## LABOR NEEDS

Let us begin by looking at the labor needs for the country as a whole and for the rural areas. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates reveal that future job requirements will place a premium on a college education and will seriously limit the employment prospects of people who do not graduate from high school. Current employment trends indicate that the fastest growth is in the professions. At the other extreme, employment in the farm occupations, the group with the lowest educational level, is expected to decline.

This does not mean, however, that there will no job openings for agricultural workers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that during the 1965-75 period 1.7 million farm workers will die or retire. Although employment will decline by 700,000, about a million replacements will be needed.

The 22 million vacancies expected in all occupations as a result of deaths and retirements and the 17 million expected to result from employment changes total an estimated 39 million job vacancies for the 1965-75 period. Nearly two-thirds of these vacancies are expected to be in occupations where the average worker has at least a high school education. This will include 6.5 million vacancies for professional and technical workers and about 18 million in the managerial, clerical, sales, and craft occupations. In 1970, the medians for these four groups were between 12 and 13 years of schooling.

The composition of rural labor needs will be somewhat different. Deaths and retirements will account for a higher proportion of vacancies since the labor force is older. Also, replacement requirements will reflect the fact that today a smaller proportion of rural workers are engaged in white-collar work and a higher proportion in blue-collar work than in urban areas.

If past trends continue, total employment will rise more slowly in rural areas than in the cities, but employment in the clerical, craft, machine-operative, and service occupations will rise faster. On balance not enough jobs will be provided to reduce out-migration to zero. To reduce the unemployment rate to 3 percent, while reducing net out-migration to zero, would require the creation of 2.5 million jobs over and above the normal expansion. This might be done by: (1) inducing more factories to locate in rural areas, (2) setting up more public works in lagging areas, (3) expanding the rural beautification program, and (4) working for equity of access to government outlays for educational, manpower, health, and other services to rural people.

### EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Education opens the doors to self-understanding and self-fulfillment as well as understanding of others. Also, education has long been heralded as a necessary ingredient in participatory democracy. Education certainly is intended to do something more than increase the earning capacity of the individual. To look at education solely as an investment in higher income is to deny the value of an expanded intellect.

From the standpoint of the rural community, it is important to recognize the value of education and training in preparing the local labor force for the job openings offered by local employers and by other employers who might locate in the community if a qualified labor force were available. Moreover, education for citizenship is of great importance to rural communities, since local people must

become politically articulate if they are to work for equity of access to governmental services.

Pursuing a policy of encouraging movement in and out of rural areas would mean that the rural worker would have to compete with urban workers whether he moves or remains at home. To give rural residents a fair chance in this competition, the rural-urban gap in educational attainment will have to be closed. Evidence of this gap is the educational level of males aged 25 to 54 years in 1969. Sixty-eight percent of the metropolitan males, but only 57 percent of the nonmetropolitan males, had completed high school.

### VOCATIONAL TRAINING NEEDS

Vocational training involves a plan of instruction tailored to prepare a worker for a specific occupation. Vocational training may be different from the more broadly based educational program in that it is more specifically designed to improve a worker's earning capacity and does not necessarily give him a broader outlook. The payoff may have to come within a relatively short time, since the job for which he is trained may eventually be abolished by technology or by changes in demand. By contrast, more comprehensive educational preparation should provide greater flexibility for moving from job to job.

On the other hand, vocational training has an important advantage—the short time required to get the worker ready for the job and earning money. The Labor Department favors vocational training as an antipoverty expedient because studies indicate that such training is more likely to increase earnings if the original earnings were low.

### PROGRAMS OF THE MANPOWER ADMINISTRATION

Over 250,000 rural workers were enrolled in Manpower Administration training and work experience programs in fiscal 1970. About 160,000 of them, or five-eighths of the total, were in the Neighborhood Youth Corps—the great majority in short-term summer work projects.

Institutional and on-the-job training programs conducted under the Manpower Development and Training Act have been attended by 42,000 rural residents. Their training has covered a variety of occupations, oriented mostly toward nonagricultural industries. Workers are trained primarily for occupations where labor is in short supply. Of special benefit to the rural underemployed is that provision of the act which authorizes training projects linked to economic development efforts in areas of chronic labor surplus. In fiscal 1970,

training opportunities under the Economic Development Administration program numbered about 14,000.

Operation Mainstream is a small program primarily for older rural workers. Its objective is to give unemployed workers meaningful work experience in projects that will, for example, enhance the beauty of rural areas or help expand recreation or other community facilities. There were about 21,000 enrollment opportunities under this program in fiscal 1971.

#### SPECIAL RURAL MANPOWER DELIVERY SYSTEMS

Population dispersion makes it exceedingly difficult to effectively deliver traditional training and employment services to rural workers. For this reason several delivery systems have been designed specifically to meet the needs of the rural work force. The oldest of these is the Smaller Communities Program, under which mobile offices of employment service specialists travel to remote areas to provide the local residents with the full range of manpower and supportive services that they would find at a full-functioning local office.

The Concerted Services in Training and Education program represents a joint effort on the part of several government agencies to bring all their resources to bear on a rural area in order to improve employment opportunities, primarily through training and education. A local coordinator is hired to work with community leaders to accomplish this objective. Sixteen demonstration areas have been organized in thirteen states.

Another program is the Area Concept Expansion (ACE) or "Ottumwa Project," so called because it was first tried experimentally in Ottumwa, Iowa. Previously scattered local offices have been centralized, or consolidated, at an economic or commuting hub of a widespread rural area, thus providing geographically expanded opportunities to job applicants and employers. It also makes available to people in the outlying areas the services of technically trained specialists. ACE projects are now operating in twelve states.

A new approach is "Operation Hitchhike." Basically this is a method of overlaying manpower programs on existing compatible institutions in rural areas. To test the feasibility of building on existing organizational entities, the Manpower Administration has subcontracted with a delivery agency (usually the Cooperative Extension Service) to provide a broad spectrum of manpower services in remote rural areas. In fiscal 1971, ten such projects were funded. Several additional projects will be funded this fiscal year.

Migratory farm workers have been singled out for special atten-

tion by the Labor Department. In 1969 and 1970, an Experimental and Demonstration Project was conducted to test ways of providing manpower and supportive services to migratory families, as well as to help them settle out of the migratory stream. Attention was focused on about 750 families whose home base was the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas and who traveled to farm jobs in selected target areas in six Midwestern and three Northwestern states.

This year, the Labor Department has allocated \$20 million for a more comprehensive program to help 5,800 migratory farm workers and their families. Health care, educational assistance, food stamps, housing, and other necessary supportive services will be provided through coordination with existing agencies in the local areas. For those who want to settle out of the migrant stream, the program will also provide comprehensive training and job development.

There is some evidence that rural manpower services may tend to reduce the rural-urban migration. According to a study done for the Office of Economic Opportunity by Abt Associates, individuals who used public employment agencies were much less likely to migrate. Also, individuals who had received vocational training were far less likely to migrate. Such training appears to have been linked to higher incomes and better jobs, and thus defused the economic incentives to leave.

The Manpower Administration does not limit its services to workers who prefer not to move. For many years an interarea clearance system has enabled a local office to help a worker who wants to find a job outside of its jurisdiction. The efficiency of this system is being improved as a result of experimentation with the use of computers. Five states now have statewide Job Banks which give every local office in the state a computer printout of the jobs listed with all of the state's local offices. The ultimate goal is to have a completely automated nationwide job-matching system.

Some workers need not only help in finding a job but also supportive assistance in obtaining housing and various social services in the new community. A few rural and urban workers have been helped in this way through experimental labor mobility projects conducted by the Manpower Administration in the late 1960's under a special provision of the Manpower Development and Training Act.

#### MANPOWER ADMINISTRATION RESEARCH PROGRAMS

Under Title I of the Manpower Development and Training Act, there is a provision that "the Secretary of Labor shall . . . arrange, through grants or contracts, for the conduct of such research and

investigations as give promise of furthering the objectives of this Act." Under this provision, the Manpower Administration has financed rural manpower studies conducted by colleges and universities, private consultants, nonprofit foundations, government agencies, and graduate students.

Some of this research has dealt primarily with problems of farm workers. The Rural Manpower Center at Michigan State University organized a colloquium to probe the manpower implications for fruit and vegetable mechanization. Another study, conducted by David North of the Trans Century Corporation, examined the impact on the resident American work force, of alien immigrants who live in Mexico and commute regularly across the border into the United States.

The Manpower Administration also sponsors research into the broader aspects of rural manpower. A most important example of this is the recently signed contract with Michigan State's Center for Rural Manpower and Public Affairs to set up a research group which will provide the Department of Labor with research and consultation for the formulation of policies and programs to improve rural manpower services.

The Manpower Administration is interested in objective evaluations of its own programs. An example is the study by Miles, Henry, and Taylor of the North Star Research and Development Institute, "Optimizing the Benefits of Neighborhood Youth Corps Projects for Rural Youth."

## LEGISLATION

The Emergency Employment Act authorizes the spending of \$2.25 billion over a two-year period to enable governmental units to hire unemployed persons for transitional public service jobs. These jobs will be in such fields as environmental quality, health care, recreation, maintenance of public facilities, and other fields of human and community development. A county with a population of less than 75,000 can receive funds under Section 5 through an agent such as the governor. Section 6 will be of special benefit to the many poor rural counties since it provides for assistance to depressed areas.

The president's proposed welfare reform legislation would potentially generate more rural jobs, particularly in trade and service, by pouring more money into the economies of rural communities. Whether the Welfare Reform Bill would reduce rural-to-urban migration is still open to question. The few insights gained from special studies show that differences in the size of welfare payments are not

a factor in the decisions of the poor to migrate. Usually, a rural poor person who is on welfare or underemployed is willing to endure hardship and low income rather than move. The decision to leave home is often prompted by the person's inability to obtain any income at all. Those poor people who left rural areas typically did so at the time they reached adulthood and could find no work to support themselves or when they were forced out of agriculture.

The Manpower Administration's task force which is preparing for the Family Assistance Plan intends to make counseling available for workers who want to migrate.

### SHORTCHANGING OF RURAL AREAS

As is true of many kinds of services provided by the federal government, the manpower services provided to rural workers are frequently inferior in both quantity and quality to those provided for urban residents. The predominantly rural counties account for about 22 percent of the nation's population and about the same proportion of its unemployment. However, less than 16 percent of the state employment service staff positions are allocated to serving people in rural areas. Although Manpower Administration training and work experience programs are designed to help poor workers escape from poverty, only a fourth of the enrollments are in the rural counties, where a third of the low-income labor force is located.

Because we do not have adequate documentation, it is difficult to claim for rural workers the manpower resources which are rightfully theirs. It is not enough to improve the documentation of rural needs. Facts and figures will not be translated automatically into new resources to help rural residents. There is also need to develop a more effective approach for advancing the interests of rural communities in the political arena.

### WHAT LAND-GRANT COLLEGES CAN DO

There are many areas in which the land-grant colleges and the U.S. Department of Labor can help each other. Areas of possible cooperation seem to be research, training, and rural community relations.

One reason why the cities get more manpower services is because they have the research resources to document the need. The land-grant colleges are among the few rural spokesmen with the research expertise to inventory rural manpower needs and identify places where help is needed most. Land-grant colleges have already helped us with research. For example, a consortium of land-grant colleges in the Northeastern



states recently completed preliminary findings in a study of the feasibility and cost of extending unemployment insurance coverage to farm workers.

Some land-grant colleges have participated in training for agricultural occupations under the Manpower Development and Training Act. We would welcome further help in training for both farm and nonfarm jobs.

The land-grant colleges could make a significant contribution to manpower program planning and design. They can make our programs more relevant. Also, we are anxious to encourage local participation in planning for rural communities. We would like to trade on the relationships that land-grant colleges have established with local leaders to get them fully involved in rural manpower programs.

Together, as a cooperative venture, we can bring to rural workers the training and guidance they need to realize their own personal objectives.