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Book Reviews

Rural Welfare Services. By BENSON Y. LANDIS. Columbia University Press, New York, 1949. 201 pages.

RECOGNIZING that in a short book he cannot present detailed facts on all "civic and agricultural activities clearly related to social welfare work," Dr. Landis says that agricultural Extension workers, educators, officers of general farm organizations, and the cooperatives, are among those for whom this book is prepared. His materials are presented in 16 chapters, most of which present the programs and services of specific agencies or specific lines of service. He opens his discussion with a consideration of social welfare activities and a brief summary or inventory of outstanding rural social trends and needs, and calls attention at several points to the traditional lag of welfare activities in rural areas. By and large, he explains the lag in terms of the traditional self-sufficiency of farm people, psychological as well as physical; the tendency of such institutions as the almshouse and outdoor relief to linger longer in rural than in urban areas; the traditional aversion of farm people to public assistance or charity and the large size of rural counties and that the services needed are diverse and the social needs not so readily obvious as in urban areas.

Probably the most important contribution the book makes, not by way of preaching or promotion but by the presentation of facts, is the setting forth of the evidence that the welfare movement has definitely reached rural areas. The fight against tuberculosis and the drives of the Red Cross which reached rural areas almost as early as they reached urban areas, and the development of health services, form a good example of a steady development that is taking place and the principles upon which the welfare movement has developed in rural areas. From the time, 40 or 50 years ago, when practically nothing more was done than to care for those in the almshouses and on outdoor relief, to 1946 when 1,842 counties had full-time professional services, development of rural health

services has moved forward. Counties have evolved as local units of administration and State and Federal aid is channeled through counties, with more and better services constantly added.

Rural areas are not yet completely in the welfare movement, however, as evidenced by the fact that farm people are not yet covered by the old-age and survivors insurance of Social Security. But child welfare services were greatly expanded under the Federal-State program initiated by the Social Security Act, the dependent aged need no longer go to the poorhouse, and many blind and crippled people who live in rural areas now have services equal to those available in cities. The evidence is that farm people thoroughly approve these advances in welfare programs and there is some indication that the traditional aversion to becoming recipients of social-welfare services has not been so deeply set in the minds of farm people as many have assumed. This book should further dispel that aversion, for, as the author says, "rural people often say that they do not like or want social welfare services—yet daily the need for these services is more deeply impressed upon them and gradually more and more people roll up their sleeves and work to secure or maintain activities."

Other than rural-welfare technicians and leaders would do well to read this enlightening book which shows that the welfare movement, like the Agricultural Extension Service and the Soil Conservation movement, has grown in response to felt needs on the part of rural people. It has moved far but still lags behind the urban welfare movement. Dr. Landis points the way for its next natural steps forward. His "List of Agencies" and bibliography should not be overlooked by those who are seriously seeking enlightenment on rural welfare activities, problems, and programs.

Carl C. Taylor