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EXTENSION AND RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

*J. Carroll Bottum, Professor Emeritus
Department of Agricultural Economics
Purdue University*

Community development has been and is going on in many places today without the aid of the land-grant universities. Communities have been and are making decisions for better or for worse just as farmers were making decisions before the establishment of the land-grant universities, the experiment stations, and the extension services. Therefore, the task in community development is to improve and speed up community development while at the same time decreasing the frustrations and frictions of economic and social adjustments. If this cannot be done, then community development as a specialized activity, in the sense that we are speaking of it, will go by the board, and society will stay with existing processes or some modification of them.

Action organizations and agencies often say that the community development process just involves lengthy discussions and that it is they who finance the housing, get so many feet of sewers or water lines laid, and take other action that really counts in community development. Of course, it takes both the community planning and the action. Houses built and feet of sewers and water lines laid without respect to the total needs and implications to the community may compound the community's problems. This does happen just as community development groups do sometimes merely talk. But to say that an effective overall development group in the community is not needed is like saying all you need is masons, carpenters, plumbers, and painters in constructing buildings and that you do not need the owner, the architect, and the contractor.

Since the recent rural development legislation has passed Congress, more rank and file lay leaders are asking the question that one of them asked me in a public meeting last week, "Is there anything to community development?" Many more are starting to take a serious look. To some, community development is simply getting more jobs in rural areas; to others, it also means improving the quality of living and making community changes with less frustration. To me, it is all of these.

If educational programs in community development are to be

effective, three tasks have to be performed: (1) establishing a social structure in the community for additional knowledge to be incorporated into the community decision making, and determining what outside resources are available, (2) providing a staff to service this structure, and (3) providing continuing research which will make available both physical and social technology for community development.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

At this point in time I believe the setting up of the social structure and the staffs to service them are the most critical. We need research and will always need more, but much information is already available in this area, and as we move along with the process, we can determine better what research we need. We certainly did not have all the research needed in the production area when we started to work in agricultural extension.

In my judgment we will ultimately need a community development group in every rural county or parish. In New England it may be the town or a group of towns. Groups might be organized on a smaller or larger than county basis. However, if they are organized on a smaller basis, more manpower than is available may be required to service them. If they are organized on a larger than county basis, they usually do not have a large enough group of representatives from the county to be a viable group in local affairs. Of course, many problems are of a regional or state nature, and these county groups may provide representation for regional or state committees.

In the typical county there should be a committee of 75 to 150 persons who identify the problems, set priorities, and relate to the total citizens in the county. In addition, a study committee of 15 to 20 members or ad hoc committees are needed to make the analysis and relate to the larger committee. The larger committee may meet only one to four times a year. The core committee probably should meet once a month in most cases. Representatives of governmental agencies in the county should serve on and be consultants on the larger committee.

The individuals making up these groups must be the *natural leaders* interested in the community's long-run welfare and dedicated to the community. They should have no legal powers and be responsible only to the citizens of the community. Their appointment must also arise from the confidence of the local people. There are now reasonable and tried processes for selecting persons to comprise these committees.

These committees must have some feeling of accomplishment. Therefore, it is important that some activities selected have some possibilities of showing results in a reasonable time. The committee itself, however, should not become involved in carrying out the action. The activity should be put into operation by some already established agency, committee, or organization, or a new group should be created to carry out the action.

SERVICE STAFF

There is ample evidence that such groups, if they are to be viable, must be serviced by professional staff from the extension service or some similar agency.

Therefore, we need a "critical mass" of individuals at each of our state universities to take leadership in servicing these groups. This critical mass is the minimum number of staff members involved in any major activity if continuity and the proper interplay between individuals is to be assured and if the group is to have a significant impact in the university and in the state. We suggest a minimum of four staff members. Such additional personnel as is necessary to service the county, regional, and state groups may be added at the state or area level.

These people must be technically trained analysts and must have an empathy for people and their problems. They also must be creative and be able to communicate. It is not easy to find individuals with these four qualifications. At this stage, therefore, it will require more than usual in-service training. It is advantageous if several of the social sciences, and in some cases the physical sciences as well, are represented on the state staff.

At the county level, some agent living within the county needs to be involved. This agent must be someone who drinks coffee with the local leaders and who understands the local values and is accepted by the local people as representing their interests. The county unit may be declining in importance in our governmental structure, but at this stage in most rural areas there is too much allegiance to it to ignore it.

The functions of the state and area agents working with the local county agent are: (1) to assist in the process of setting up the local group, (2) to help the group determine their method of operation, (3) to help the group identify their problems and determine their priorities, (4) to put the problems into the problem-solving framework, (5) to obtain for the group authoritative information concerning the problem selected, and (6) after the decision

has been made, to help the action organization to which the problem has been delegated in carrying out a program.

Putting the problem into the decision-making framework, item 4 above, is the heart of the task. This takes real skill, digging, and time on the part of the staff. However, unless this is done and done well, the educational representative has added little to the community development effort.

The community development staff or the director of extension needs a modest budget for hiring the services of other resource people in the university or outside of the university when they can contribute to the solution of a particular problem. At times special short-run studies need to be made to get the required information.

RESEARCH

A multiple research approach is needed in community development. There should be: (1) a core group to put current problems which require immediate answers into the decision-making framework using already available research and data, (2) an interdisciplinary group to work on intermediate and longer-run problems, and (3) fundamental discipline-oriented research which may be done in the traditional university departments.

The core short-run group of researchers must be prepared to make analyses that may require no more time than one to six months. This means some changes in our experiment stations to allow for this. Many individuals doing this research may need to be engaged for part of their time in extension work. Their research laboratories are the people and their problems in the field and not the laboratories on the campus. These people are really research analysts.

The second interdisciplinary group may do the intermediate or longer-time research which involves total approaches to problems. It may involve the systems approach as well as other approaches. Individuals may be brought together from different disciplines for a period or as a permanent group.

Research involving new physical technology or social technology may be conducted in the traditional university departments. Breakthroughs may be made in many community development areas just as in the production areas. A new way to handle solid wastes or new schemes to handle welfare might be examples. This offers a new set of challenges to the traditional departments if they gear up for such problems.

In the early stages of community development research, it is important that funds be allotted carefully by the directors of the experiment stations to accomplish certain objectives or they will be siphoned off for traditional research.

Administrators like to define community development very broadly when they receive new funds because they always have more demands in the traditional areas than they can meet. Neither do they feel as much at home in this new area.

SUMMARY

If community development is going to go once additional funds are available, then we must have: (1) an adequate social structure for community development to take place, (2) a trained staff to service the various groups, and (3) a three-pronged research program. In addition, we must have an administrative staff in our institutions with some of the same fervor for this activity that existed when extension was started.

PART IV

*Property Rights and
Land Use*

