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ELEMENTS IN MAKING RURAL DEVELOPMENT GO

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To know how to make rural development and related programs go requires that we know where communities are supposed to go and whether their past direction has been "go" in the sense of their relevant goals. All communities have been on the "economic and social go" over the last two decades. Quite frequently, this change has been rapid, perhaps so much so that the basic problem for many is not one of change but rather how to moderate change to a rate which places less strain on the institutions and people of the community. It is less a problem of "go" and more "where to go."

There are basic reasons for the current groundswell of concern over rural development. And the reasons are more basic than just more economic activity and employment in the countryside. Industrial and service development is a means rather than an end (although the latter is the concept of rural development held by many) toward removal of the basic causes of broader societal concern over rural areas. It is but one (though very important) means for attaining the rather diverse goals posed for rural development.

The basic cause, the underlying reason, for active public concern is the goal of equity. An extremely inequitable distribution of benefits and burdens of national economic growth occurred over the last three decades. National economic growth without regard to its distribution among areas and people became an overriding and almost single-valued domestic objective of economic development during this period. Eventually we came to realize that a continued high state of national economic development did not bring gains to the farm sector when technology advanced supply rapidly in a market with low demand elasticities. But with this hole in the vessel plugged through large public subsidies and supply control programs, we continued to sail with economic growth and employment at the national level as the main goal of domestic policy with little regard to its equitable distribution.

The more rapid the national growth and the rate at which labor resources have been drawn into it, the greater has been the sacrifice in the majority of truly rural communities. Rural areas have

sacrificed through loss of economic activity, increased costs of public services, inadequate personal services, and other facets of community life. National development simply did not bring equitable gains to all economic sectors. It is this inequity which has finally brought a broad and intense societal concern over rural development, perhaps even leading to the Rural Development Act of 1972.

I emphasize the equity foundation because it is too often overlooked in many concepts of what rural development is about and in programs designed to accomplish it. The notion that rural development is first and finally a private and public thrust to bring growth of industry and recreation to every rural community misses this point. National growth may mean little or nothing to the rural community experiencing business decline, growing unemployment, and erosion of capital values. Likewise, industrialization of an individual community does not promise gain to all strata of the population in this community. Some people can be brought gains, and others such as older, unskilled persons, nothing. While industrialization is one of the important elements of rural development, all communities do not have opportunity to gain by it and not all persons can gain in a community where it is applicable.

BROAD INTEREST GROUPS

With the basic problem underlying rural development being spatial inequity in national economic growth over the last three decades, the major overall goal of rural development programs is that of appropriate, efficient, and complete (in the sense of all affected groups, and not just the community at large) means of erasing these problems of distribution. Different groups have, of course, varying suggestions or concepts of what the content of rural development should be—with reference to their own particular income problems and goals.

In a somewhat parallel sequence over time, rural development has had different orientations—almost always in relation to the economic and social problems of a particular group or public. In an initial phase, the concerns of rural area development were particularly in terms of employment opportunities for workers and families being displaced from farms. In a second and somewhat recent phase of concern, emphasis has turned as well to problems of rural communities as related to decreasing economic opportunity, increasing costs of public services, and declining health, recreational, and consumer services. In a third phase of concern, rural area development has become more nearly a national issue and is viewed broadly as a means of alleviating the environmental,

social, population, and related problems of cities. Perhaps this phase has the prospects of backing for the concept with the necessary legislation, public appropriations, and programs.

Four publics or groups now most active and best organized in the affairs of rural development are: (1) farmers concerned with farm prices and income, (2) chambers of commerce or similar groups in rural towns where "some developmental momentum already is underway" (or a fair foundation for it already prevails in population base, recreational or other resources), (3) firm managers who wish to escape the higher factor costs, union restraints, and environmental and social depreciation of cities, and (4) national leaders concerned with the intense social and environmental problems per se of cities.

To commercial farm groups and leaders, rural area development typically means farm programs which have a direct impact in higher farm income, and subsequently a secondary or multiplier effect in generating employment and economic activity throughout the community. Commercial leaders in individual rural towns typically seek rural community development to increase industry, public facilities, and recreational or other services directly linked with greater employment or expenditures by "foreign" consumers who import manufactured goods from it or make seasonal migrations into the community. Firm managers are interested in lower production costs, particularly of fabricating industries, and more stable social and physical environments as they bring rural industrialization through plant relocation or initiation. Urban leaders and legislators who have joined the rural development movement are directly concerned with stemming the growing population concentration. They emphasize rural community development mainly to the extent that it has the potential first impact of dispersing the population through such means as new cities.

The direct interests and goals of these four major groups which are now putting more "muscle" behind the broad concept are not necessarily consistent with overall facets of rural community development. For example, farm programs of the type prevailing over recent decades do generate more income for commercial farmers. They serve as one element of demand for consumer goods and some classes of producers goods within the community. However, since their main benefits go to larger farms, they help bring about larger and fewer farms. They may even now have net negative multiplier effects throughout the nearby community as the growing number of big family farms causes further reduction in employment by agriculture and even dampens the total farm demand for capital items such as machinery and buildings.

Where rural towns pursue a single objective of industrialization to increase employment in manufacturing and services, the implied developmental and income effect throughout the farm sector is practically nil. This is particularly true in typical farm areas which produce commodities such as vegetables consumed at the location but which produce mainly standard products exported into the national market.

If the problems of urban congestion are tackled through instruments such as new cities dispersed over the countryside, a few rural communities can gain in development. But in even more communities, the decline in population and economic activity will be accentuated. To add a city of 100,000 in western Kansas or south central Iowa which supplies near-at-hand employment in the region can speed migration from and economic decline of the hinterland communities. In other words, a developmental thrust which benefits an economic and social aggregate such as a region or state need not, or seldom will, similarly benefit all rural communities contained within the aggregate. It will, in fact, bring economic and social costs to some communities.

Finally, firms locating plants in rural areas do bring development, job opportunities, and economic gain especially to underemployed or unemployed females and low paid males. They bring indirect or second-round gains to business, which is a recipient of the multiplier effects of greater payrolls in the community. But not all, not even the majority, of rural communities can gain from firm-initiated plant relocations, nor do all strata of the population of the area where the plant locates have their inequities erased.

OTHER GROUPS WITH SPECIFIC INTERESTS

The four active groups mentioned above have somewhat effective organized means for promoting their interests for rural area development at state and federal government levels. Among others, four additional groups have intense interest in trends and structures of rural communities. Aggregatively, however, they are either less organized or have ineffective means for promoting their interests.

A fifth major group concerned with developmental status includes those families and persons of rural communities which are declining in economic opportunity and social services and mainly want to see the trend arrested or offset. Their interest in state and federal programs or possibilities is not the same as for those communities which "already have everything going" and simply want to or can add more industry and employment to what they already have. Unless the downtrend in rural area development

is arrested or offset, this fifth group has a miserable outlook for two decades or longer. Increasingly, their community is characterized by declining capital values of nonfarm assets, reduced income, an older population, and deteriorating public and consumer services.

Both farms and rural towns have been experiencing a reduction in employment and number of firms. But they have had contrasting fortunes in value of capital assets. A farm owner squeezed out of agriculture because of economic circumstances typically can sell his real estate assets for considerably more than he paid. The small town or village proprietor more typically finds his capital value liquidated along with his economic opportunity.

The problem complex of this fifth group implies the need for: (1) subsidy in supplying efficient public and consumer services, (2) tax relief to offset the indirect costs of state and national development which fall on them, (3) public aid in reorganization of the mechanisms of education, local government, and other public services, and (4) facilities for retraining and eventual employment of people in a smaller number of centers which have growth opportunities.

Indirectly, the tax paying public is a sixth major group interested in the structure and development of rural communities. With tax burdens considered to be heavy and the high cost of public services in sparsely populated and small administrative units, the implied adjustment is consolidation of service supplying units. Consolidation itself implies new structures of communities with gains to some and costs to others of the reorganized community.

A seventh major group that has a large stake in the structure and services of rural communities is the youth. The opportunities of this group, which has not yet entered the labor force, rest on the resources and structure of the community. As with the taxpayer group, its interest does not rest on the development of the particular community, but may even imply dissolution of it in order that a larger community can provide a wider set and improved quality of educational or vocational services for employment anywhere in the nation and state.

The eighth major group includes especially older persons, mostly employed but some not. This broad and heterogeneous group consists of retired persons, operators of smaller farms too old to start anew or elsewhere, and proprietors and workers in small town establishments. They do not gain from a new plant in the community because it requires skills and orientations other

than theirs. This group suffers from low income, restricted personal services, and generally a dismal outlook on life and opportunity—which eroded away with the prior structure of the community. Industrialization, improved education, larger farm programs, and similar programs just do not have much "spillover" for this group.

The challenging task in rural community development is to identify the nature, location, and extent of inequities falling on rural communities and various population strata in them; then to evaluate and provide alternative means for alleviating or redressing these inequities. In this context, a central challenge is to eliminate the inequities of low income, underemployment, and unfavorable living and welfare conditions in nonmetropolitan areas. In a few favored locations, a substantial extent of these inequities can be removed through industrialization. In a greater number, however, the inequities can be removed only through entirely different means and programs. Broadly, inequities must be eliminated or economic and social opportunity must be provided through public means and policies.

BROAD CONCERN IN INEQUITY

Just as unrestrained and heavily promoted aggregate growth at the national level spawns a complex and inequitable distribution of costs and benefits among regions and communities, a single goal of development at the state level also can bring an inequitable distribution among metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas or among rural communities. If we seek development without regard to its distribution effects, the programs and processes have almost a single dimension. The "name of the game" is industrialization (or an equivalent such as recreational development, tourism, etc.). We would work to add industries where they have the most obvious advantage and where the thrust typically is already in this direction because of endowments such as natural resources, location, financial base, existing transportation networks, and large public installations already in place. We would neglect all other communities which are in the process of decline. To those communities that are gaining, we would bring more gains; to those experiencing social and economic costs as the labor force and population are drawn away to growth centers, we would bring added burdens.

To be certain, industrialization at favored locations is an important dimension of rural community development. But other major dimensions are equally important and revolve around the distribution problem. To view the problem mainly as one of industrialization would result in efforts which bring gains only to favored larger

towns and blind us to the indirect and growing costs of state development to purely rural communities. To only a minority of communities can industrial or recreational development bring salvation. The remaining communities must anticipate a continuing exodus of people as nearby communities succeed in their attempts.

Next to industrialization, recreational development always stands high in programs to attain rural development or is nearly viewed as what "rural development is about." It is, of course, important in a rich nation with growing income and leisure time. It provides a realm of potentially funded projects which can encompass natural sciences. Yet the typical or main approach to it in development is the exploitation of natural resources in a manner which will attract more tourists and generate income and employment in a region or state. This is fine and is part, but only part, of what rural development is basically about.

The recreational facet of rural development also has its equity or distributional facets. Pursued in the conventional manner, it places emphasis on natural resources, and the consumers who benefit especially from it tend to be relatively high-income mobile families. But there are other facets of recreation which are not necessarily oriented to natural resources. They relate especially to the older persons whose low income or other conditions prevent them from moving to a condominium in Florida and whose recreation needs are not tied to natural resources, the highly weighted facet of rural development programs.

EQUITY AND PROGRAM ELEMENTS

The question of "how to make a rural development program move" even has equity implications. If the success criterion were showing our extension directors, federal funders, or state legislators, from limited resources in a specified time period, a maximum addition of industry or gross state product and active involvement of people, we would turn only in one direction. It would be to those towns with favorable conditions for industrial or recreational development. This concentration on communities with greater endowments would tend to increase the inequity between the thriving communities and the declining communities. We could show that we have moved and made progress, but we still would not have made much progress in solving the basic equity problems which give rise to the broad and modern concern over rural areas. Overall progress requires a broad and complex set of program elements that would assist groups with intense interest in equity problems relating to rural development. Lacking time to develop a more sophisticated approach, I will mention a few

of the groups and program needs and possibilities which relate to them.

Urban Populations and Society at Large

For three generations, the concentration was on national economic growth with the countryside adapting, aside from programs for commercial farmers, to it in whatever manner possible. Urban populations and society at large now have some interest in rural development. But their interest is much less in the welfare of rural residents than in: (1) preventing actual or potential degradation of their own social and physical environments, and (2) overcoming or averting the scale diseconomies and problems inherent in large urban systems. However, to help these groups solve their problems in a manner with spillover effects in rural development is not a simple task in terms of conventional extension and land-grant university approaches.

Land-grant universities can best provide assistance on urban problems through research results, published and communicated to urban leaders and federal legislators on such things as: the extent, if true, to which urban economic activity does not fully cover the social costs of its operation; the effect of public investments in slanting development toward urban centers and away from other geographic entities; and the relatively greater subsidizing (aside from commercial farm programs) of urban than rural welfare. State extension services are not geared to programs for meeting these urban needs, even where their state encompasses large cities. These problems must be treated at interstate and national levels with methods adapted accordingly. We must get the research results to urban leaders, national legislators, and federal administrators. These results perhaps might be best communicated by a set of workshops or symposia organized and implemented through the National Public Policy Education Committee, the four Regional Rural Development Centers, the federal Extension Service, and other relevant groups.

Rural Communities With Endowments for Development

Rural communities with endowments for recreational and industrial development, where commercial activity can readily grow, are best adapted to traditional extension methods. These methods may include work with individual farms and agribusiness firms, feeding information directly to decision makers who can use their own resources to implement it either as: (1) local commercial interests seeking greater economic activity, or (2) firm managers seeking plant locations which best serve the objectives of lower costs and greater profit. This is the most "clear cut" dimen-

sion of the rural development problem. The approaches to it also are the easiest, comparatively, in terms of conventional and historic approaches in extension education methods. It is the clearest case in which the "entity to which the information is taken can do something about it" through its own initiative and resources. In contrast, solution of most other dimensions of the rural development problem requires policy legislation, funds, and programs at national or state levels.

Rural Communities Lacking Endowments for Development

The majority of truly typical rural communities lack the resources, facilities, and leadership to capture the interests of a "foreign" firm in injecting new capital into the town and thereby creating more local employment and commerce. The majority must look forward to a rather complete restructuring of their community. They generally are communities which remain geared to the agricultural sector around them. They are faced with further adaptations in population, social institutions, public services, health and recreational facilities, consumer services, and business establishments, as farms continue to increase in size, decline in number, and increasingly substitute capital technology for labor. These communities contain a large portion of the persons, especially new labor force entrants, who must migrate elsewhere if they are to find favorable nonfarm economic opportunities. But even more of a "left behind group" are: (1) the smaller farmers who gain relatively little from commercial farm programs, (2) middle-aged persons who will spend the rest of their working lives employed in public institutions and private enterprises servicing agriculture and the surrounding community, and (3) older persons who already have retired or are in the process of retiring.

These communities need to know in which direction to go and how to get there. Add to them those on the border line of having resources suitable for an industrial plant, and we have a special need for guidance. What these communities need is the equivalent of a consulting firm which can assess their resources, evaluate courses of action for them through a simulation model, and establish alternatives and their trade-offs accordingly. This, of course, is an activity with heavy costs in personnel and other resources. Yet a university extension service really geared to handle rural development problems as they actually and fully exist would have several teams available to perform these functions for communities needing and demanding it. The budget of a good many extension services is large enough to allow these activities if the positions of personnel communicating agronomic and other information now available from commercial firms were converted to these purposes.

Much of the task in rural development requires knowledge and education which just does not conform to the historic molds. If done right, all state rural development extension programs need several times the resources now available, especially for intensive community aids as suggested above. And there can be no dividing line between applied research and extension education for these purposes. To serve the type of community discussed here, a unique study of each type is needed with the results then interpreted as a set of alternatives for it. The leader of rural development extension programs in the typical state should have as much as a half dozen quasi or highly applied research-consulting teams at his command. The programs needed cost much more (per program activity, but not necessarily per person affected) than conventional extension programs.

People Who Lack Economic Opportunity and Must Migrate

In overall rural development plans, of course, the hope would be that developing communities might fully absorb surplus labor supplies from nearby communities without developmental opportunities and that inequities between "have" and "have not" communities might be thus prevented. To the extent that this "matching" is favorable or feasible, it should be heavily promoted. Prospect for such "meshings" over total rural space is not in sight for some long time, however, because of the rate at which the rural structure is changing, the declining labor demand in typical rural communities, and locational preferences of labor force entrants. Continued migration is in view because of these reasons.

Conflicts in goals of rural development best can be avoided if appropriate efforts and investments are made in training and aiding the relocation of these people from communities without developmental opportunities simultaneously with aid to communities favored with developmental possibilities. The solutions to their employment and relocation problems lie in further improvements in vocational training and retraining, job information, occupational guidance, and other services which are best supplied through federal and state agencies. The needs are now so well expounded in the literature that further detail is not needed here.

Taxpayers and Others Concerned With Costs of Public Services

As mentioned previously, improving efficiency and cutting costs of public services largely imply restructuring and consolidation of communities. It implies extending the geographic and population expanse over which particular facilities such as schools, police protection, and water systems extend to attain specified qualities

of services at reasonable per unit costs. Unfortunately, the major cost economies of all sets of services are not realized at the same population or geographic aggregation. Hence, the task of "putting together" a community of a size which utilizes major scale economies of services in a manner to relieve tax and other costs is not simple. Much research is yet to be done on these cost functions, alternatives in tax and financial systems, and possibilities of meshing scales of community and service systems.

Extremely Disadvantaged Rural Groups

Numerous groups that are disadvantaged in employment, health, age, and income have not shared equitably in the economic and social benefits from the nation's growth. Neither do "developmental programs" aimed at: (1) assisting communities favored with industrial and recreational endowments, (2) restructuring conventional agricultural communities, (3) adapting community service and tax structures, and (4) providing employment for mobile younger members of the work force in declining communities, solve their problems. Similarly, they will gain little or nothing from programs to improve sewer and water systems of small towns or income programs for commercial farmers. Examples are the human resources represented by underemployed farm housewives who lack equality of opportunity with urban counterparts in part-time or full-time employment. Others are minority groups, older persons of low skill and meager income who suffer from malnutrition, deplorable housing, and other inadequate services. The elements of solution for one group are not necessarily appropriate for others. Each represents a challenge in a broad rural program aimed at removing economic and social inequities. For example, here can be a whole array of new job descriptions for the extension specialists historically known as home economists. Many have changed their labels and understand the changing urgency of problems. But the programs to effectively capitalize on and steer their efforts are still to be mounted.