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NEW ENGLAND
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PROCEEDINGS
1968



UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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1968 ANNUAL MEETING

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DURHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

JUNE 17, 18, 19, 1968

UNH CONFAB EYES PLIGHT OF RURAL POOR

by
Robert Matorin
Foster's Daily Democrat
June 19, 1968

The meeting of the New England Agricultural Economics Council continued at the University of New Hampshire yesterday with an address by Dr. Winthrop C. Libby, acting president of the University of Maine.

Having served on the President's Commission which issued the U.S. Department of Agriculture report, "The People Left Behind," Libby spoke on "Rural Poor in New England".

"Complacency with rural poverty is a national norm," he said. Although concern with urban poverty is highly necessary, "poverty in rural New England is a very real and a very pressing social problem."

While 29 per cent of this country's population is rural, he continued, over 41 per cent of Americans in the poverty class are rural. Only one out of every 16 suburban dwellers are among the poor, compared to one out of eight people in the cities and one of four in rural situations.

"Most rural people in a condition of poverty want work," the doctor explained. "The best cure for poverty is money."

What is needed, he said, is federally-sponsored community improvement projects designed on a regional basis and using the unemployed as workers. These projects would pay the national minimum wage or better to every unemployed person willing and able to work.

Dr. Libby called on the over 100 conference participants to pass a resolution at their Wednesday business meeting proposing to the Northeast Regional Advisory Manpower Commission the initiation of a qualitative and quantitative study of rural poverty in northern New England.

Libby was followed in his remarks by UNH Professor James Bowring. "We at the University of New Hampshire have been interested in this rural poverty problem for some time," he said.

The group is alienated from society. Among the positive steps that can be taken in this area are to "create among the ordinary citizenry an awareness of poverty," to produce goods and services providing the people with "poor power", and to supplement educational training with an income tax in reverse.

The bias of folklore surrounding poverty must also be removed, he said. Pride in not accepting aid from any agency makes many of the rural poor do without.

In addition, he continued, we need access roads, new industry, increased Social Security, and an increase of capital flow into rural areas by encouraging people to live in the country and work in towns.