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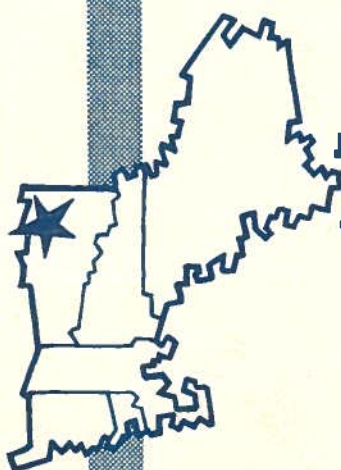
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1963 PROCEEDINGS

New England Agricultural Economics Council

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PROCEEDINGS

NEW ENGLAND AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS COUNCIL
ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Burlington, Vermont
June 24, 25, and 26, 1963

"AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT"

RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT IN MAINE

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A formal program of resource development began in Maine, with the designation of Washington County as a "pilot county," in the fall of 1956 under the earlier Rural Development program. As you are well aware, this earlier program has since been expanded and reorganized into the current Rural Areas Development or RAD program.

To begin, let us review briefly the present organizational structure of the RAD program in Maine at both the state and county levels. At the state level we have organized a State RAD Committee. This present committee is an expansion of the original State Rural Development Committee. Membership is made up of representatives of the various state agencies, industry, labor, agriculture, education, the state university, and others. It has as officers a chairman, deputy chairman, and secretary. The State RAD Committee also has an executive committee composed of its officers and four members selected by the chairman from the overall committee.

Also at the state level we have a State Technical Action Panel (TAP). Membership is composed of the state directors of the Farmers Home Administration (chairman), Soil Conservation Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and the United States Forest Service Experiment Station Project Leader in Maine. The State Technical Action Panel attends all regular meetings of the State RAD Committee. This has resulted in a greater coordination of effort on the part of both these state committees.

At the county level we have a similar type of committee structure. County RAD committees are composed of representatives from each organized town as well as all the varied industry groups, agricultural education, and existing local organizations interested in development work. The overall committee is broken down into subcommittees by resource areas such as agriculture, forestry, industry, recreation, human resources, or any other potential resource the area may contain. Each subcommittee is headed by a chairman and is responsible for all information pertaining to the inventory, identification of problems, needed assistance, and programing for the particular resource area it represents.

County RAD Technical Action Panels have been appointed in all counties. In addition to straight-line USDA agency representatives in each county serving on these panels, State Service Foresters and State Department of Inland Fisheries and Game personnel have been appointed to the County Technical Action Panel. This has worked out very well in broadening the technical assistance available to RAD and Area Redevelopment committees at the county level.

Rural Area Development committees have been organized in five counties (Aroostook, Oxford, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington). Two of these (Aroostook and Washington) have since received Area Redevelopment designations (ARA Public Law 87-27). Redevelopment committees have also been organized in five other counties (Hancock, Knox, Lincoln, Piscataquis, and York) as a result of Area Redevelopment Administration designations. All designations received to date by Maine counties with the exception of Washington County have been on the basis of high unemployment and underemployment conditions. Washington County was automatically designated on the basis of its prior designation and participation in the earlier Rural Development program.

Two other counties (Androscoggin and Cumberland) are also undertaking a program of resource development. Organization in these counties however is somewhat different than the RAD and Area Redevelopment committees organized in other counties. Each of these counties had county regional planning and development committees already in existence. These are also two of the smaller counties in Maine and each have large urban centers of population. Rather than organizing RAD committees in these two counties, it was decided that the Technical Action Panels assist these existing committees in carrying out a program of resource development. This decision was made at the county level by members of the County Technical Action Panel in each case. It had been determined, in both instances, that the overall objectives of the existing committees were to seek representation from all organized towns and to carry on a program aimed at developing all potential resources rather than limiting their activities to industrial development. Therefore, the organization of RAD committees in these counties would have resulted in a duplication of effort.

Then, out of a total of 16 counties, we have RAD committees in five counties (two having ARA designations), area redevelopment committees in five counties, and two counties where a program of resource development will be carried on by existing planning and development committees.

The preparation of initial Overall Economic Development programs (OEDP) has been completed in all ARA designated areas. The OEDP's have been approved at the state level and by the Area Redevelopment Administration. In nondesignated RAD counties, one county (Somerset) has completed a preliminary draft of its OEDP. The two most recently organized RAD counties (Waldo and Oxford) will begin OEDP preparation shortly.

Time does not permit me to discuss with you all of the various observations made and problems we have encountered, or to describe in detail projects implemented through RAD. However, I would like to mention a few of the problems and experiences we have faced. Please bear in mind that the comments I am about to make are based solely on observations and experiences in the field rather than on research results.

Also, it is difficult to evaluate and discuss RAD without simultaneously referring to the Area Redevelopment Act (ARA). This is particularly true in our case where seven counties have received ARA designations.

I am sure you are aware of the need for strong committee organization at the county level. Just as important is the conveying of the RAD concept to the people of the area. Since this is a "people's" program and the most important element for success is the people themselves, they must have a knowledge and understanding of the process before they can be expected to begin work in developing an active program. Of the various methods we have used in organizing RAD committees, there is one that to date is proving superior. Organization begins with a group of about 8 to 10 people who are recognized leaders in the county and interested in the further development of its resources. This group forms a steering committee and works closely with the county agent and County Technical Action Panel (TAP). With a group this size it is much easier to create an understanding of the meaning and purpose of RAD.

The steering committee first prepares a set of bylaws. As a result, the direction, activities, and overall goals of the county committee are clearly defined and laid out. A program to expand the committee is then planned. Each member of the steering committee is assigned a block of towns and is responsible for explaining and stimulating interest in the program, and seeking representation from these areas to the overall committee. We have found in some areas that there is a resistance to federal programs. By using this approach and having the program explained by local people, the stigma of "just another federal program" is greatly reduced.

The first project undertaken by the newly organized committee is the preparation of an Overall Economic Development program. This has proven to be one of the most important tools in the RAD process if carried out in the proper manner. By the "proper manner" I mean involving the people on the county committee. Not only does it provide a guide for carrying out an action program, but more fundamentally it serves as an educational tool. By collecting information to provide for a complete inventory and analysis of both human and physical resources, a great deal of interest and enthusiasm is generated. In terms of its resource potential and current problems impeding economic development, many, for the first time, are learning things about their county they never realized before. The incorporation of the wants, desires, and ideas of local people in the programs to be carried out has generated further interest in implementing the action phase of the program.

These benefits that can be gained through OEDP preparation can be easily lost however when its preparation becomes the sole work of Technical Action Panels and other agencies. This has occurred in some counties where Area Redevelopment committees were organized as a result of an ARA designation. Most of the

actual OEDP preparation has been done by the agency having organizational responsibilities in these counties. As a result, such OEDP's have been primarily an inventory of resources with little or no emphasis given to program planning.

Another common problem we have been faced with is the emphasis people place on industrial development. They have a tendency to look toward the establishment of new industry as the solution to all their problems. If this attitude is left to persist a very important objective of the RAD program can be overlooked—the development of human resources. A program of rural areas development or area redevelopment can not be successful in meeting its objectives and goals if industrial development alone is stressed. Not that industrial development should be overlooked, but instead a well-balanced program must be developed. It has been our experience that unless a well-balanced program is developed little will be accomplished.

This problem exists particularly in those counties that have been organized as a result of ARA designations. Since all the assistance through ARA is tied to direct employment one can easily see why this happens. Although it is intended as an additional resource to aid in total economic development, the availability of industrial loans becomes a prime attraction and everything else is easily overlooked and forgotten. However, I would like to emphasize that this has not happened in all ARA designated areas. In Washington County, for example, ARA has worked well as an additional resource for the RAD program. In York County, where no county committee had been organized prior to its ARA designation, a very active program is now underway. I am sure that with a little more coordination between the agencies at the state level responsible for organizing county development or redevelopment committees, many of these problems can be overcome and avoided in the future.

Lastly, I would like to say that we in Maine who have worked with this program feel that its full potential has yet to be realized. It has given us an opportunity to work with both the farm and nonfarm segments of the economy with one common goal in mind—total economic development.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEES - MAINE

