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## URBANIZED SOCIETY NEEDS MET BY RURAL PEOPLE

Lee Taylor\*

There are no viable social structures in urbanized society that prevent urban people from providing their own needs in terms of food, fiber and recreation. Therefore, rural people will have to make a concerted effort if they are to fulfill any of the future needs of an urbanized society.

In the social institutional organization of urbanized society, food and fiber production are primarily integrated parts of general economic production of goods and services. In the United States, unlike many areas of the world, a major social equilibrium problem is over production of food and fiber. People and land are moved out of this area of economic activity. The affluent resources of the society are increasingly transferred to other social institutional areas.

New, secondary, social institutions are expanded in the urbanized society. These are illustrated in the areas of health, welfare (including concerns for poverty), and leisure-recreation. These new institutions come from a contraction of human attention devoted to some older primary institutions. In the case of the institution of economics (production and distribution of goods and services), scientific and mechanical efficiency in food production contract and reduce the amount of rural human energy and personnel used. One can say the relative importance of this rural population contribution to urbanized society is diminished. Many projections for types of food production by the year 2000 suggest that the rural contribution to this institutional space will be practically eliminated. Later, these institutional changes will be examined and their implication for rural and agricultural policy and planning discussed.

A second, and fundamentally new, need encountered by rural people for urbanized society is outdoor recreation. The human relations of outdoor recreation are part of the urbanized society's secondary social institution of leisure-recreation. This paper

pretends no brief for the fundamental "goodness" of outdoor recreation. Certainly we intend no implication that outdoor recreation is "better" than indoor, or rather more city-cultural types of recreation and leisure. Spectator sport viewing in a stadium, an afternoon in a fine arts museum, or an evening of night-clubbing, all are part of the social-behavior space of the leisure-recreation institution, along with outdoor recreation.

While many ideological arguments will be brought to bear on the differential merits and demerits of types of leisure and recreation it is an observable social fact that in affluent urbanized American society people have a high propensity for many types of outdoor recreation, for example, diving, hunting, fishing, camping, boating, all illustrate the situation.

There are no recognized structures in social organization which make it necessary for rural people to involve themselves extensively, or probably even at all, in providing outdoor recreation opportunities for urbanized society. Indeed naturalists, conservationists, and urban entrepreneurs might ultimately make a sufficient and total provision of outdoor recreation for urbanized society.

Conceivably, then, with the contraction of the historic and traditional role of food production and the bypassing of outdoor recreation, rural people could be left to a quite demise in urbanized society. The residue of rural poor, in tarnish and blight, could be relegated to the urbanized society's social welfare institution.

It appears possible, perhaps probable, and maybe even desirable, that the total U.S. society become urbanized in the twenty-first century. But the challenges of this article are the examination of roles of rural people in meeting the requirements of urbanized society. Assuming food and outdoor recreation,

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although of different importance, are both requirements for this particular urbanized society, are examining, then, the potential for rural people to participate, lead, and/or control the provision of these needs for urbanized society. Implicit in this examination are questions like: What are the advantages for rural people in meeting these needs? What are the advantages for urbanized society in having these needs met by rural people? What are the implications for rural policy if rural people are not to meet needs?

In all of this discussion the definition of rural people is those living primarily geographically outside the metropolitan areas and who are, otherwise, in the "mainstream" of urbanized society culture, and excluding societal "misfits," people in cultural islands or so-called pockets of poverty, but instead rural residents who are systematic contributors, or potential contributors, to the total urbanized society.

### **URBANIZED SOCIETY'S FOOD AND FIBER NEEDS**

Between 1970 and 2000 population projections suggest the U.S. population will grow by more than a hundred million people, for a national total of about 314 million people [7]. Practically all of this additional population will be urban. Indeed, it is estimated that 85 percent of the U.S. population will be in urban places in 2000 [1]. Although about 48 million people will live in rural areas in 2000, according to projections, few of these will contribute directly to food and fiber production.

In the middle 60's, it was estimated that only 11 million people lived on farms. Less than 1 million of these lived on the farms which produced about 80 percent of the nation's food and fiber [4, 8]. The exodus of rural farm population continues with scientific and technological advances in agriculture.

Engineers, scientists, and other intellectuals in the urbanized society continue to move the knowledge base closer to a totally urbanized food production. This is illustrated with the production of plants and animals in skyscraper buildings, with hydroponics, and with remote computer controlled field machines (e.g., tractor cultivating and harvesting equipment).

Research in food preservation for long periods of time, with and without refrigeration, via ionizing radiations and similar techniques, continues to advance [5]. Scientific horticultural research is leading to the shaping of plants (e.g., grapevines and fruit trees) for higher quantity and quality production and easier cultivation and harvesting [11].

Vertical integration in agribusiness, from production, through processing to distribution, generally

reduces the rural population's contribution to urban food needs. This is to say, that ideawise and economically, most vertical integration is controlled by urbanized society points of origin, and residentially speaking, by urban people. Expansion of plans like one-stop farm centers further reduce the rural population control of food production [10].

Given the above social norms and social structures, one should anticipate in the decades ahead, certainly by early in the 21st century, rural contributions to food production will be contracted to very minimal laboring and semi-skilled machine operating roles. The ideas, technologies, and economics of a systematic food production could become totally urbanized.

An alternative would be the aggressive and systematic expansion into and control of agribusiness forms of vertical integration by rural people. From a social organizational point of view two structures in society support the systematic exploration of this alternative. First, the total quality of environment for urbanized society might be enhanced. The establishment of viable (economically and scientifically) agribusiness firms in the smaller towns and rural residential areas could contribute to the decongestion of larger urban population centers. It is interesting to note that without such an orientation some of the large government agriculture research laboratories are located in major cities, New Orleans and Philadelphia, for example. Second, the desires of many rural residents and urban residents to live in smaller towns and open country, while being "main stream" participators in urbanized society, could more easily be accommodated. Put another way, in this last part of the twentieth century for many people to remain in rural areas is to accept a poverty or eccentric sub-cultural status. It appears organizationally possible for scientific urbanized food and fiber production to be geographically located in smaller population centers, enabling rural people to maintain leadership in the historic role of food production for cities.

### **URBANIZED SOCIETY'S OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS**

Outdoor recreation is increasing rapidly because of societal affluence, shorter work weeks, and increased transportation mobility. It is by no means a necessarily rural phenomenon. Increasingly, and particularly in suburban areas, open and green outdoor spaces are being systematically set aside for recreation. Tennis courts, swimming pools, and shooting ranges, to name a few, are generally outdoor and generally urban. Hunting, camping, and boating are usually in rural areas, but not always. They are participated in proportionately more by urban than rural people.

Spacewise, most outdoor recreation is in rural areas.

In terms of participation, most outdoor recreationers are from metropolitan areas. Most statistics show outdoor recreation to be increasing as measured by number of participants and dollar expenditures. Therefore, one can say this part of the leisure-recreation secondary urbanized society social institution is expanding. Presumably expansion could be accelerated for the future in both rural farm and non-farm areas. But the expansion need not be disproportionately in rural areas. As in the case of agribusiness, rural people and rural policy will have to compete systematically and scientifically for rural outdoor recreation if they want to give leadership to this area of human activity and receive social, ecological, and economic benefits from it.

In an urbanized scientifically oriented society the procuring and disseminating of data and information measurably influence social behavior along with ideology, propaganda, and charisma. In the new and rapidly developing leisure-recreation social institution, the weight of verifiable evidence is still minimal. The relative socio-biological value of jogging, nudist camps, water skiing, night-clubbing, dancing, camping, opera, horse racing, chess, sailing, and gambling remain in the area of conjecture. Some of these forms of leisure-recreation stretch the mind, the imagination, the muscles, the economy; some tan the hide while others soften it; some build character and mental health while others erode them. These are illustrative assertions about leisure-recreation in the urbanized society. The assertions carry more weight of history than scientific evidence [2, 3, 6, 9].

Attitudes and values of people plus socio-geographical systems analyses need to be scientifically researched and the findings widely disseminated in the urbanized society in order to increase the probability of maximizing the functions of the leisure-recreation institution. Social organizationally, it is in the interest of

rural people to aggressively participate in the systematic knowledge building for leisure-recreation. With the urbanized society's propensity for data and rational behavior there is a need for systematic information on outdoor recreation. Rural people could form scientific and economic associations to meet this urbanized society need. To the extent that evidence supports the national values for outdoor recreation in rural areas, rural people could give the economic, social, and idea leadership.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Carefully articulated rural policy in the area of agribusiness food and fiber production and in the areas of outdoor recreation can facilitate and expand the contributing roles of people to urbanized society. Without a forcefully articulated policy in these areas, we would anticipate, from a social organizational point of view, the continued decline of the rural population's contribution to systematic agribusiness and a probable by-passing of rural people in the provision of outdoor recreation.

There are two major and greatly significant roles for rural people to fulfill in contributing to urbanized society, namely, agribusiness food and fiber production and outdoor recreation. In both of these cases, rural people and rural leadership will have stiff competition if these roles are, in fact, to be filled by rural people. Few, if any, viable social structures in the urbanized society would require, as it were, that these roles be filled by rural people.

National agricultural associations, the United States Department of Agriculture and regional agricultural associations should act at once, and in cooperation, to convene a series of policy seminars concerning "Contributions of Rural People in Urbanized Society."

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