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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE
RESETTLEMENT ADMINISTRATION

By

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The program of the Resettlement Administration naturally divides itself into two main headings, with many subdivisions and ramifications of each. Perhaps the more important of these two divisions has to do with the improvement of the economic and social status of our rural population; the second has to do with land utilization, with particular reference to major land uses such as those for agriculture, forestry, recreation, game refuges, etc., as distinguished from the detailed consideration of land use within highly developed areas.

The organization of the Resettlement Administration provides for four subdivisions under the Land Utilization Division, four subdivisions under Rural Resettlement (Rehabilitation), a Division of Suburban Homes, and a Division of Management. The first two divisions named are perhaps the most important in Region VIII. The Land Utilization Division contains an important section for land planning and research, which includes some personnel for land classification, determination of area policies, and a cartographic unit to service the division. Another section deals with the action program and is called Project Planning and Control, and of necessity operates closely in cooperation with the Land Planning Section. A third section of Land Utilization is that of Project Development, and this section has the function of putting the action program into operation through the actual development of land conservation projects.

Under the division of Rural Resettlement are the following departments or sections:

1. Rural Rehabilitation in Place, which is subdivided geographically by states under the Regional office, with a State Director closely associated with the State Extension Director in connection with the advisory and technical operations of the division. Administrative and financial responsibility, however, is maintained in the Resettlement Administration.

2. Resettlement has as its function the relocation of families, and cooperates closely with the Land Utilization section where the resettlement families from conservation areas are a part of the program. The Resettlement section is concerned also with the relocation of individual or isolated cases, where such is required.

3. Cooperative Community section, which is perhaps more highly developed in other regions of the United States than in the

Pacific Northwest. It appears certain that there is a place for this activity, and the fundamental principle applies here that cooperative activity must originate and develop from the thinking of the individuals, rather than be handed down from above.

4. Section of Construction, which has to do with farm building construction where this appears to be desirable, and other types of operations of a similar character. This division works closely in harmony with the Project Development section under Land Utilization.

Provision is made for a section of Home Economics, for the conduct of work in this field, and it is believed that there is an important place for this type of activity in the region.

The Division of Suburban Homes has been set up in the Resettlement Administration, which has as its function the development and supervision of what were formerly called subsistence homesteads where these are associated definitely with industry. Those projects that were formerly considered in the subsistence homesteads category that relate primarily to agriculture are now included in the Resettlement Section of the Rural Resettlement Division.

In addition to these divisions, there are provided the necessary requirements and personnel for (1) legal advice extensively required in land transactions; (2) personnel selection, (3) information dissemination, (4) labor relations and other types of service.

It is evident that serious mistakes that have been made in land development and use are in part responsible for the relief situation in rural areas. In some sections almost the entire cause of deplorable conditions is found in the unfitness of the land to produce an income sufficient for families to maintain a decent standard of living. There are many open range areas in the West which undoubtedly never should have been thrown open to settlement. There are other areas that have produced timber, which have clearly demonstrated that the land is not suitable for agricultural production under the long-run conditions of the present decade. There are many rough and mountainous areas where families are attempting to make a living, and either because of the poor quality of the land or their inability to remove the stumps, they cannot bring the land to a state of economic productivity. The passing of the timber industry from many areas has left a stranded population. Other areas are isolated because of physical conditions and even though the land may be productive, the areas are not sufficient to support the various governmental and social facilities that are normally expected in an American community. Many other problems of land use can be called to mind where maladjustments are evident.

Perhaps we may say that the following are indicators of maladjustments:

1. Where tax delinquency generally prevails. This may

be an indicator that land is being put to wrong use, particularly where such delinquency has been prevalent over the last decade.

2. The intensity of the rural relief problem is worthy of consideration as indicating the possibility of maladjustment in land use, although many other factors contribute to the relief burden.

3. The inability of families to maintain a decent standard of living over a considerable period of time, involving lack of social facilities.

It is of course recognized that the ability or capacity of people to perform is a tremendous factor contributing to serious conditions in the rural areas. Probably the most difficult problem encountered is the fit of the individual or family to the land environment. The determination of the procedure to be followed in individual cases is a tremendous task and a responsibility that some maintain is impossible. Nevertheless the experience of the last year has demonstrated that much permanent good is being accomplished.

An important objective from the human standpoint and from the public standpoint is to so conduct the activities that families will be removed from the relief rolls and be placed in situations where they can permanently support themselves. Another objective is to readjust the location of population so that the total and per capita costs for governmental and social facilities are reduced, with increased value to the people served by them. This may be accomplished in many cases by the removal of scattered populations, where these facilities are limited, to areas where schools, roads, power lines, etc., are already available or can be constructed at low cost per capita. Perhaps one out of six or eight rehabilitation clients is in the class where relocation is necessary. These cases are found grouped in many untenable economic situations.

All relocation or rehabilitation operations under the program are on a voluntary basis. Under no circumstances are compulsory methods used, although such might well be resorted to in some isolated cases. It has frequently been suggested that when suitable rehabilitation has been offered to a client and he rejects it, he should then be stricken from the rolls and receive no further direct relief. If the client cannot be shown the advantage to himself of accepting the rehabilitation offer, there is something wrong with the machine, or the client is not a suitable rehabilitation applicant.

The danger of stifling individual initiative in this program is recognized, and every effort is made to make it possible for the client to help himself or be given the opportunity to rehabilitate himself. Whenever an individual may find his resettlement site himself, advice and assistance is given him, but he is encouraged to conduct the entire transaction himself and if possible on his own moral and financial responsibility. The cry of some

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that this is a program of paternalism has been heard. The dole has wrought its havoc in the morale of the country, and it should be apparent that rehabilitation is preferable to this attempted solution of the problem. Some, however, may maintain that the cost is unjustifiably high. We will grant that the cost of rehabilitation per capita from an administrative standpoint is frequently high and it is unavoidably so, if a large number of mistakes are to be avoided in making the right type of analysis of the individual.

By far the greater number of clients is found in the class of families where comparatively small amounts of improvements to their properties or small amounts of capital goods are required to place them on their feet. Such cases are of course susceptible to rehabilitation with much greater ease than those who are on such poor land or in such isolated locations that resettlement is required. The clearing of some land, the addition of a cow or two, a poultry house or some other capital investment of a few hundred dollars may be the answer in many cases. Of course in some instances very large amounts of capital goods appear to be required, and in all cases commitments in these directions are made only when there is reasonable assurance that the loans may be repaid.

All transactions in rehabilitation and resettlement are on a strictly business basis. Every client is expected to repay the advances with interest, and large numbers who were granted loans less than a year ago have already begun the repayment of their loans.

Among the most important enemies of the program are its friends. The enthusiasm and lack of complete understanding on the part of many as to the aims, objectives, and methods, have been responsible for many erroneous statements as to numbers of personnel employed and the type of work that is being undertaken. There appears to be little question in the minds of thinking people that the land program, as conducted under the Land Policy Section of the A.A.A., was a sound program, and it is being continued under the Resettlement Administration with the same ideals, but of necessity some procedures are different because of the administrative exigencies of the 1935 Recovery Act.

In Region VIII of the Resettlement Administration, it is our belief that every employee connected with the organization is becoming imbued with the idea of service. The difficulties of administration in an emergency program are sometimes almost insurmountable, and yet we are fortunate in having a morale among the personnel that supports sound procedure.

The organization in Region VIII has no expectation but that adverse criticism will be heaped upon it, and this adverse criticism is tremendously beneficial because it compels consideration of every principle and every procedure so that the best possible results under the circumstances may be obtained. The public benefits to be derived are reflected in large measure in the summation of individual benefits. The consummate detail with which every individual case must be considered is responsible for

a slow program. Nevertheless with the program set-up to continue to June 30, 1937, it is believed that the organization can justify its existence as one of outstanding and sound accomplishment.

Careful consideration of the relationships of the organization, to other agencies in related fields, is of the utmost importance. In Region VIII it is felt that cooperation of the U. S. Forest Service, the Agricultural Experiment Stations, the Agricultural Extension Divisions, the Planning Boards and Councils, and other agencies, is of the utmost importance. The organization is not particularly concerned as to whom the credit goes for a particular piece of work. The objective is rather to get a sound, constructive job done, using all of the means at hand and letting the credit take care of itself.