

The Role of Agriculture in Area Development

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When this topic was assigned to me some six to seven months ago, I had formulated in my mind a fairly well established procedure that I would attempt to follow. Since that time there have been several official announcements made by the Secretary of Agriculture, Secretary of Commerce, and the Secretary of Interior concerning the role of their respective Departments in area development. These announcements and the increased activities of various federal agencies in area development have influenced my thinking concerning the topic assigned to me. Therefore, I have changed my original thoughts concerning this paper.

This topic will be divided into two parts. The first part will be a partial summary of the role of the **federal government** in area development. The second part will be concerned with our role in area development—the role of agriculture teachers in NACTA schools.

Before proceeding with the discussion I believe I should define the word development. Development implies growth. It means greater income, more job opportunities, better goods and services, and wise use of resources. It means more people have better opportunities to improve their present standards of living. This process of growth does not necessarily affect all areas or all persons equally, or in the same direction, because growth does not occur uniformly throughout an area. It occurs by increasing the productivity of a nation's resources. In this process these resources may be shifted or redistributed to more productive uses. Therefore, growth involves many adjustment processes. It may even mean higher incomes for fewer people.

Development involves the entire community in both depressed and non-depressed areas. It is not just a problem symbolic of low income areas but due to the various adjustment process involved with increasing production involves all areas. Growth does not necessarily mean industrialization for industrialization is not realistic in many areas. In fact, **growth** may not be a realistic goal for all areas. Therefore, we may conclude that development means better opportunities for more people to improve their standards of living.¹

Recent Federal Action in Area Development—A Summary Statement

It is difficult to cite the first important landmark of participation by the federal government in rural development. One may say the authorization of the Patent Service in 1836 to find and distribute new plants and seeds was the first important step. Others may say the establishment of the Federal Extension Service and still others may cite some other program. However, it seems that modern day rural area development activities have evolved through three periods of growth and now is embarked in a fourth stage of development.

The first period was initiated during the 1930's and continued until the United States became actively engaged in World War II. During this period there was a definite effort to meet problems in certain areas of low income agriculture which resulted in the sub-marginal land program, the operator relief and rehabilitation programs, and the land use planning measures of that period. Policy was directed toward efficiency of resource use and maintenance of a minimum level of consumption. Toward the end of this period there was a widespread recruitment of labor from these areas. Definite assistance and loans programs were provided to small farmers to increase total output. The submarginal and land use planning phases were terminated.

"The second period was the post-war forties when awareness grew that the low income problem in broad regions was chronic, that it would not and did not disappear with relative prosperity either in the general economy or in commercial agriculture, and that much of the solution lay outside agriculture. During this period, research was shedding a great deal of light on the subject and contributing to further public awareness and understanding, but for various reasons, earlier measures to deal with the problem were curtailed rather than expanded. Perhaps it may be said that this period culminated in the December 1949 proposal by the then Secretary of Agriculture to the Congress that it enact specific policy measures for meet-

ing the problem of "low income farm families and economic stability," and in the Congressional House Document No. 149, **Under-employment of Rural Families**, Joint Committee on the Economic Report, 82nd Congress. In these two papers, one finds the definitive policy framework of the rural development program that was to follow"²

The third stage was during the 1950's when the policy of rural development was initiated into action. Research studies and pilot projects including broad federal agency participation at all levels were initiated. In 1955 the Department of Agriculture issued a report on the **problems** of low income agriculture. This report included an announcement of a Rural Development Program. Pilot studies were initiated in 1956 in 25 rural countries to promote employment opportunities and broaden the economic base of low income rural communities. By 1960, some 210 counties in 30 states and Puerto Rico reported some 2000 individual projects underway to improve farms, build new industries and expand existing ones, help both youth and adults to obtain the training they need, improve health, and accomplish other aims. Probably the most important objective of this program was to establish a climate of opinion permitting broader use of non-farm solutions to the low-income farm problem.

In 1959-60, federal agencies and departments cooperating in the Rural Development Program moved to implement an executive order firmly establishing the Committee for Rural Development "to consolidate its accomplishments and to provide more formal federal organization." An increase of \$3 million in funds for Extension work in connection with the Rural Development Program was approved. Directors of State Extension Services approved a policy of making use of Rural Development organization and techniques in helping low income rural communities. Training sessions were held. Federal agencies stepped up their rural development activities and established coordinating groups within their departments.³

The fourth period of federal activity began in the early 1960's. The Secretary of Agriculture established a Rural Areas Development Program within the Department of Agriculture early in 1961 in order to help solve the problem of rural unemployment. All Department of Agriculture agencies were instructed to commit their resources toward the support of the State and local authorities to meet this objective. The director of the Rural Areas Development Program was charged with the responsibility of coordinating the work of all Department of Agriculture agencies in this direction. Thus, the Department of Agriculture began the next phase of the Rural Area Development program initiated in the 1950's.⁴ The Extension Service was given the responsibility for taking this program to the local people. The following directive was recently made by the Secretary of Agriculture concerning the responsibility of the Extension Service in the Rural Areas Development Program and the rural phase of the Area Redevelopment Administration.

"The initial responsibility of Cooperative Extension in programs of overall area economic development is to bring together representatives from all interests and leadership groups who might make a contribution to such efforts—the aim will be to motivate local initiative. . . ."

"The second responsibility of Extension will be to assist local leaders in providing the type of organization needed to get the job done. This may include utilizing or adapting existing organizations or mobilizing new ones. . . ."

"Third, Extension with the cooperation of the Technical Action Panels and other federal, state, and local agencies will assist county, area, and state R. A. D. committees and other resource development groups in formulating and implementing programs of resources development and social improvement. . . ."

On May 1, 1961, President Kennedy signed into law the Area Redevelopment Act which intensified participation in area development by the Federal Government in areas suffering from chronic unemployment or underemployment. This act is supervised by the Area Redevelopment Administration in the Department of Commerce. Five broad types of federal assistance is provided to the so-designated depressed areas: 1. Loans for industrial and commercial projects. 2. Loans and grants for public facilities. 3. Technical assistance grants. 4. Occupational training.

In order to qualify for this assistance an area must assume the following responsibilities:

1. Develop an approved overall economic development plan. 2. Support active development organizations that will establish working relations with the State economic development agency. 3. Raise the necessary local and private capital. 4. Determine the occupational training needs of the area. As of March 18, 1963, 996 areas and 51 Indian reservations were designated as being qualified under the provisions of the ARA program, and 895 areas and 36 Indian reservations had qualified for assistance by having their overall economic development plans approved.⁵

In September, 1962, the Public Works Acceleration Act was passed. This Act provided for authorization of funds to Federal works projects that are already authorized by Congress and to existing Federal financial assistance programs that will contribute significantly to the reduction of local unemployment, which will meet an essential public need, and will be substantially completed within 12 months after acceleration or initiation. This program is supervised by the Department of Commerce.

An additional act passed in 1962 related to area development was the Manpower Development and Training Act. This Act authorizes an adult education program for two classes of people: (1) Those whose skills have been rendered obsolete by the advance of technology and by dislocations in the economy; and (2) those new entrants to the labor force who with further education will be able to meet shifting employment needs. Workers in farm families with less than \$1200 annual net family income shall be considered unemployed for the purpose of the act.

From the preceding discussion we may readily conclude that the role of government in area development has increased in activity in recent years. This activity has been largely making more funds and services available to local communities to utilize if they so desire.

The important observation is that a wide and diversified program has been initiated within the USDA to provide technical and financial assistance to promote and develop the use of human, land, water, and related resources in rural areas for farm and non-farm use. The burden of program initiation has been placed at the local level. In the majority of the cases of assistance local leadership and initiative was the first criterion to be met before assistance was provided. A statement by the Committee for Economic Development emphasizes this procedure when discussing the role of government agencies in economic development in a recent report:

"The primary objective must be to help people to help themselves.

In this way human suffering will be reduced and productivity increased. Governmental participation should not infringe on the freedom of individuals or of business firms. To the greatest extent possible it should facilitate and encourage the processes of freedom of movement and of a free market."⁶

Area Development—The Role of Agriculture Teachers in NACTA Schools.

After reviewing all the various governmental activities in area development we cannot help but wonder what service, if any, should we as teachers of agriculture undertake in area development. In order to answer this question we have to re-examine the philosophy of our respective college and universities and the role of our agriculture departments. Basically, our school serves a specific geographical area. Since we serve a specific area should we not also assume responsibility for the development of that area? This question is a very important one for it challenges the function of a university and its relationship to the area or community in which it is located.

Many of our schools are located in the so-called depressed areas of the United States. In many of these areas the university is the largest single employer. These areas have many real basic difficulties. Many of these areas have no economic justification for industrial expansion. Therefore, other vehicles will have to be used to promote progress toward development. Reallocation and realignment of resources will have to be made. A great deal of effort will be needed in marshalling resources to attack the problem and make significant progress. In other words, positive and specific measures are required.

Development is not easy. Often there are many waves that will beat against it. The limitations imposed mean that particular effort must be given to the analysis of the development potential and to formulation of realistic goals. However, these limitations are real difficulties and we know that real difficulties can be overcome. It is only the imaginary ones that are unconquerable.

This brings us back to our basic question, "What role should we as agriculture teachers in NACTA schools assume in area development?" In order to answer this question perhaps we should look to a basic premise presented earlier in this report. "The primary objective must be to help people to help themselves." Is this not our most important role—to help others help themselves? If this is our role, can we

accomplish it? There are many ways this can be done. I am just going to mention four.

1. We can help local rural organizations to become interested in development by: participating as members of these organizations, guiding the discussions toward creative thinking in development problems, helping these organizations to coordinate their objectives, etc.
2. We can assist the Extension personnel in promoting Rural Area Development programs by participating on OEDP and resource development committees and by actively working with RAD projects.
3. We can study and promote ways that may be conducive to development projects in our area. The research and action can be financed by University funds, foundation grants, technical assistance grants or by our own individual efforts.
4. We can help promote the cooperation of rural and urban elements to organize a unified effort in establishing and promoting an action development program. This can be done through our associations with both rural and urban people.

By participating in these several activities we can help to make certain that sincere effort is given to the analysis of the development potential of our respective areas and to the formulation of

realistic goals. According to one economist: "Failure to realistically assess the potential for local economic development will bring down on development program agencies the same kinds of bitterness that exists among farmers in many areas where agricultural development has been encouraged in the face of economic forces which are forcing these areas out of agriculture."⁷

What I am saying is that our major challenge in development is that of motivating people—people of town and country alike. This means we will have to leave the confines of our ivy covered buildings and mingle with people. We will have to literally live with them, work with them, share ideas with them and guide them to work together towards a common goal—development.

The question that each of us will have to answer is this, Is this challenge one that is directed at me or is it one that I feel may be directed at someone else?

FOOT NOTES

¹ Much of the preceding discussion draws on a paper given by Sherwood O. Berg and D. F. Fienup at the National Agricultural Policy Forum, Chicago, Illinois, Dec. 11-12, 1962.

² John H. Southern, "Rural Area Development Policies." A paper given at the Second Annual Farm Policy Review Conference, Raleigh, North Carolina, November 28-30, 1961.

³ Much of the preceding discussion draws on **The Fifth Annual Report, Rural Development Program** by Ezra Taft Benson, September, 1960.

⁴ Material in the preceding discussion was taken from an article in the June, 1961 issue of Rural Lines "The Rural Areas Development Program."

⁵Activity Summary Report, Area Redevelopment Administration, Washington, D. C., March 18, 1963.

⁶Committee For Economic Development. **Distressed Areas in a Growing Economy.** June, 1961, Pg. 8.

U. S. Department of Commerce, **Investing in Jobs**, ARA Pub. No. 62-B, Washington, D. C.

Economic Research Service, **Rural Industrialization**, Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 252, USDA, Washington, D. C.

⁷Vernon W. Ruttan, "Rural Development Policies: Comment". Paper presented at the Second Annual Farm Policy Review Conference, Raleigh, N. C., November 28-30, 1961.

College Agriculture Study Announced

FROM: TOM ORPWOOD
NEWS BUREAU
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Dr. David C. Knapp has been appointed associate director of a nationwide study of American colleges of agriculture, including teaching, research and extension, University of Maryland officials announced here today.

Headed by Dr. Charles E. Kellogg, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, the study was started in December because of vast national and international changes which have occurred in farming related industries. It is being supported by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Dr. Knapp comes to the University of Maryland from Harvard University where he had a fellowship for advanced study of natural resources policy. This was during a sabbatical leave

from the University of New Hampshire as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The newly appointed associate director obtained a B. A. degree from Syracuse University in 1947, an M. A. degree in 1948 and a Ph. D. degree in 1953 from the University of Chicago. He was awarded a Fulbright fellowship to study forest policy in Finland during 1959.

At the same time, Dr. Kellogg announced the members of the Advisory Board that will assist him and Dr. Knapp in developing policy for the study and in recommending ways to implement it. Advisory Board members include some of the outstanding agricultural experts in the United States. They are:

D. G. Aldrich, Jr., dean of agriculture, University of California at Berkeley; Fred Andrews, formerly head of animal science and now vice-president for research at Purdue University; Richard Bradfield, department of agronomy,

Cornell University; H. Brooks James, dean of agriculture, North Carolina State College; P. V. Cardon, former administrator of the Agricultural Research Administration, subsequently director-general of the Food and Agriculture Administration; Noble Clark, associate director emeritus, Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Wisconsin; D. W. Colvard, president, Mississippi State University.

Also, James H. Jensen, president, Orgeon State University; Albin O. Kuhn, executive vice president, University of Maryland; Paul A. Miller, president, West Virginia University; A. A. Moseman, director of agricultural sciences, The Rockefeller Foundation; C. B. Ratchford, director of agriculture extension services, University of Missouri; M. B. Russell, associate director of the Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Illinois. and T. W. Schultz, department of economics, The University of Chicago.