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SOME ASPECTS OF URBAN PROGRAMMING FOR RURAL IN-MIGRANT YOUTH.

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THIS SPEECH PREPARED FOR THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PROBLEMS OF RURAL YOUTH IN A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT (SEPTEMBER 1963) REVIEWS PROGRAMS THAT FOCUS ON THE EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS OF DEPRIVED CHILDREN AND YOUTH. IT POINTS OUT THAT COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION WHILE KEEPING THE CHILDREN IN SCHOOL LONGER, AND THE PROGRAMS TO PREPARE YOUTH FOR WORK RANGE FROM JOB ORIENTATION TO LONG-RANGE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT. THE SPEAKER SUGGESTS THAT SOCIAL SERVICES COULD BE HELPFUL TO REDUCE TRANSIENCY AND LOCATE JOBS, AND CONCLUDES THAT IN-MIGRANT PROGRAMS TEND TO DWELL TOO MUCH ON SYMPTOMS RATHER THAN DEAL WITH BASIC QUESTIONS. (SF)

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ABSTRACT

Poor in-migrants from rural areas tend to exhibit the same social, economic, and educational needs as the deprived urban groups among whom they settled. Programming in cities generally includes both groups in the target populations.

Compensatory education and preparation for work are two important aspects of programming for deprived youth. Examples of compensatory education include ungraded orientation classes; special classes to speed the learning of English; and attempts to reverse the effect of social deprivation in preschool and elementary school children through language enrichment and stimulation. Programs to prepare youth for work may be viewed as a continuum, ranging from general job orientation and guidance, to short-term occupational training, to more elaborate long-range programs of youth development.

Recent in-migrants have special problems of orientation to the urban milieu, but these seem related as much to transiency as they are to rural origin. Social services to cut down on transiency and give families a firmer base might be of long-run aid in their adjustments. Similarly, Public Employment Service's interstate job clearance system might become an important aid if it were strengthened and better organized.

Programs to help in-migrants may begin by an attack on one narrow problem, only to find that other unmet needs still stand in the way of successful adjustment. As program elements are aided and intervention deepens, institutional barriers and malfunctions of the social system become more evident. Programs should be continued and strengthened, but by themselves they cannot be expected to overcome the continuing deficits of employment opportunity and social welfare.

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INTRODUCTION

America has always been a country of people on the move. The development of enormous urban complexes seems to have increased rather than diminished the movement of people in search of a pleasanter way of life, better job opportunities, or a possible escape from poverty and discrimination. Mobility, no matter how highly prized by economists as a way of creating a better match between labor supply and demand, brings its won problems. An annual over-all mobility rate of 20 per cent means in human terms that one out of every five persons one year old or older moved from one house to another at least once during a given year. This rate, which has remained constant for some time, implies enormous personal dislocation, if only in terms of the child population entering a new school each year.

Within the general movement of the population, there has been a distinct pattern of rural to urban migration for many years. In the fifties, almost 3.5 million youth, 10 to 19, left rural areas, presumably heading for the big cities.[1/] More recently, the tide of rural emigration seems to have leveled off.

> ...the rural migrant is becoming a smaller and smaller pool while our existing urban population is assuming greater magnitude. A surplus rural population will continue to exist for a period ahead. Areas of subsistence agriculture still exist, and cities will continue to receive both the parents and the offspring of such families...However, the migrations of the past two decades have taken a significant proportion of this population.[2/]

Those who do migrate, however, will find it even harder to participate successfully in the life of the city than did their predecessors. The relatively stable, semiskilled jobs that absorbed so much of the nation's farm population in the hey-day of the assembly line have decreased in number, to the point in some places where only workers of advanced seniority are still assured of employment. In fact, many in-migrants of the forties have not been able to maintain their attachment to an industry. This has been particularly true of Negro workers, who have been the first to be laid off when changes occur in technology or in demand. The closing of the stockyards and the general decline of meatpacking as a source of employment, for example, stranded a large number of Negroes in Chicago, many of whose families are now subsisting on relief.

In effect, newcomers to the city from rural areas who are poor and unskilled become part of the city's already deprived population in those impacted areas commonly known as slums. Very few special programs carried on in large cities are specifically directed toward rural in-migrant youth. Although such youth may be unaccustomed to the speed of urban life and may have been uprooted from their habitual modes of carrying on work, school, and recreational activities, and although they may suffer from loss of their peer-group attachments, nevertheless, their most obvious disabilities in school or at work are not unlike those of other deprived youth already resident of the city.

In discussing current programs, therefore, one must make the assumption that efforts to adjust deprived youth to urban living, to prepare them for the transition to adulthood, include within their scope a certain (although unknown) number of recently arrived rural youth. Insofar as these youth exhibit the problems that the program-makers seek to ameliorate, they too are included in the target population.

Both public and private agencies are engaged in attempts to provide what Herbert Gans has called "guided mobility."

> Insofar as programs seek to aid low income people to change their fortunes and their ways of living, they are attempts to guide them toward the social and economic mobility that more fortunate people have achieved on their own.[3/]

This paper will review briefly the aspects of such programming that focus on the educational and employment problems of deprived children and youth.

SOME COMPENSATORY EDUCATION PROGRAMS

From the point of view of their employment prospects, the United States Department of Labor has described the rural in-migrants of the fifties in the following terms:

> A large proportion of these youths lacked the training to compete for jobs in large metropolitan labor markets. Some of those who had completed their schooling had been educated for farm employment. A large number consisted of young persons who had not completed their high school education.[4/]

For these, as well as for youngsters already resident in the city, some school systems have instituted programs of early prevention, to give the younger children a better chance of successful adjustment.

Milwaukee, in 1961, inaugurated a special series of ungraded classes to serve as a reception center for children just entering the area from out-of-state, as well as for city residents of some duration who are members of highly transient family groups and have constantly moved about from on city neighborhood to another.[5/] Special classes are maintained

in several schools (including elementary, junior high and high school). Each class has a maximum enrollment of 20, with one teacher, and special social work, psychological, and curriculum services. Teaching is as individualized as possible; a child can enter at any time during the school year and in most cases is transferred piecemeal into the regular school program, depending on which areas of performance he first masters at grade level.

New York City schools are attempting to orient Spanish-speaking newcomers through the "NE" (Non-English-speaking) program.[6] Supplementary state funds are available for all classes in the system in which at least 30 per cent of the students speak English hesitantly or not at all. Enrollment in these classes is held to 25, and all NE children in them must receive at least 30 minutes of special instruction in oral English each day in what is called a "language emphasis" period. Teachers in this program receive help from the NE coordinators, whose function is to show them how to use special materials and techniques developed by the Board of Education, and from Auxiliary Teachers who speak Spanish and serve as a liaison between the school and Spanish-speaking parents and children. The NE program is now beginning some experimental investigation of the use of language laboratory equipment as an aid in learning the spoken language.

Many large city school systems are now involved in some form of compensatory education. These efforts include programs of the "Higher Horizons" type that seek to raise the aspirations of lower class youth as well as to expose them to a wider variety of experiences than their own parochial milieu affords. Such programs have been successful, particularly insofar as they have helped reverse teacher attitudes as to the educability of deprived children, but they have also exposed certain deeper problems, particularly in the area of language development.

Many lower class children come to the first grade inadequately equipped with the perceptual and language skills and informational background necessary for effective coping with school requirements. Current work in learning theory suggests that the lower class home environment, while not necessarily restricted in quantity of stimulation, offers the growing child an inadequate variety of the kind of visual and auditory stimuli that foster cognitive development. To cite but one aspect:

> The lower class home is not a verbally oriented environment... . While the environment is a noisy one, the noise is not, for the most part, meaningful in relation to the child, and for him most of it is background...In actuality, the situation is ideal for the child to learn inattention.[7]

In school, this trained inattention obviously militates against the child's success.

In an effort to intervene in a compensatory fashion in the preschool years, the Institute for Developmental Studies of New York Medical College's Department of Psychiatry is now conducting experimental nursery school

classes, in conjunction with the New York City Board of Education and the Department of Welfare day-care centers. Children in these classes are being exposed to a variety of experiences intended to stimulate their ability to discriminate and otherwise to prepare them for their first formal school experience. The program elements are being evaluated as part of a highly sophisticated research design, geared to the measurement of specific cognitive processes.[8]

The specific programs mentioned above constitute only a small sample of the attempts being made by schools all over the nation, not only to keep children in school longer, but to improve the quality of their education. Unfortunately, those cities most in need of such compensatory programs are finding themselves in increasingly difficult financial straits, and many educationally desirable approaches have been curtailed to the level of demonstration projects because of inadequate funding.

GENERAL PREPARATION FOR WORK[9]

Parallel to these preventive approaches in the early years are a large number of rehabilitative programs directed to those adolescents and young adults who have either already experienced difficulty in the transition from school to work, or who seem certain to do so when they leave school. The impetus for such programming seems to have come from two directions. Schools, searching for viable nonacademic curricula, have attempted to adapt work-study programs to so-called "slow learners." In this transfer, work experience for high school students has been transformed from the occupational orientation of the past into a more generalized approach, which seeks to give the student a foothold in the world of work without necessarily preparing him for a specific job.

Similarly, community agencies, seeking to aid unemployed youth once they are out of school, have concluded that a large number are unemployable, in the sense that they seem to need general job preparation before they can become eligible even for unskilled jobs.

In the last five years, programs of general preparation for work have proliferated. They may emphasize one or another program element--such as guidance or work experience--but all are characterized by a set of assumptions about the target population: That these youth are unable to perform well on any job because of poor work habits and attitudes, limited ability, and unrealistic notions about themselves and their vocational goals. They need help to improve their attitudes, give them greater self-awareness, and for the acquisition of the fundamentals for getting a job. Specifically, they need to learn better grooming, how to fill out an application, how to travel about the city, becoming conduct at the job interview, and knowledge of employer and union practices as well as tax and social security arrangements. Most often, general preparation programs consist of group sessions for the imparting of job fundamentals and placement on a part-time job in whatever work station can be found or subsidized. To this basic pattern, the program may add remedial instruction in reading and arithmetic, individualized guidance, or help in full-time placement at the end of the program.

The success of such programs must be assessed on two levels. First, do they have much effect in enhancing the employability of their clients insofar

as the difficulty really inheres in the individual youth themselves? Unfortunately, there are very few hard data by which definitive judgments can be made. Although some youth have benefited from this type of program, the answer to this question is contaminated by the second question--are there, in fact, opportunities to utilize the benefits of a general preparation program, either in further training directed more specifically to occupations, or for immediate placement at the unskilled level? At the present time, both kinds of opportunity are in short supply for the youth who has few skills, a low level of literacy, and may be further disadvantaged by discriminatory hiring practices.

Lack of opportunity also causes a kind of slop-over of definition. As the number of unemployed youth from disadvantaged families grows, the tendency of program-makers is to expand the category of the unemployable to include more and more youth, in effect transferring the objective lack of opportunity to a characterization of the youth themselves. The result is a kind of paradox. Under conditions of full employment, only a small number of youth might be visible as a social problem group, requiring general preparation for employment; the very lack of full employment, however, undermines the success of general preparation programs by reducing the possibility of employment if the individuals enrolled should indeed improve their work habits and attitudes.

SHORT-TERM OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

As the limitations of general preparation programs have become evident, and particularly as changes in the occupational structure have lessened the demand for unskilled workers, communities have turned their attention to the training needs of youth. The Chicago public school system, for example, now has a framework for the counseling and training of dropouts, beginning with an invitation to recent dropouts to take advantage of evening counseling centers (in the so-called Double CC--"Census and Counseling"--program). The Double EE ("Education and Employment") and the Double TT ("Training and Tryout") parts of the program afford an opportunity for some dropouts to participate in a work-study program that affords on-the-job training or in occupational training classes leading to employment. The scope of the program affords an opportunity to follow the youth through several phases of adjustment, and is, by so much, an improvement over program efforts that offer help for a limited period and with limited program resources.

On the other hand, occupational training programs also are limited by the objective realities of the current labor market. Short-term training cannot impart a very high level of skill; furthermore, the occupations for which it is feasible to undertake training are limited, since they must conform to a difficult set of criteria. They must require some skill, else the so-called "training" becomes in effect merely another general preparation program. They must be in fields in which training is not already generally available; and they must offer opportunities for placement. The difficulties in meeting these criteria, as well as in finding suitable on-the-job training stations, have so far limited the scope and effectiveness of training programs for unskilled youth.

PROGRAMS OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the short-term-program efforts described above, a number of cities now have under way or in the planning stage programs of youth development that are far more comprehensive, both in terms of community involvement and in the scope of the planned intervention.[10] These programs, although originally aimed at delinquency prevention, have focused on the larger youth population of deprived areas and attempted to serve a wide range of needs, including education, family services, training, and placement. While none of these is sufficiently advanced to permit assessment of their effects, it seems clear that they will push the idea of special programming to the outermost limits. In doing so, they should be of aid, not only to the youth who participate, but also to the community at large in revealing the more basic social and economic issues implicated in the poverty and deprivation that continues as part of the American scene.

SPECIAL NEEDS OF IN-MIGRANTS

To return to a point made earlier in this paper, most program interventions are organized around the deprivation of the participants, with relatively few attempts to deal specifically with the effects of mobility. There is some evidence that the major problem is not so much movement from one area to another, as continued transiency even in the new area. Poor school attendance patterns in St. Louis, for example, were found to be more closely related to transciency than to place of original residence.[11]

Such frequent movement is related to more than one factor in the lives of families. It may take the form of "shuttling" among Southern Appalachian migrants who return home during periods of unemployment. In one Chicago elementary school with a large enrollment of children from Eastern Kentucky and West Virginia, almost three-quarters of the children transferred in and out as many as three or four times in a school year. To meet this problem, the school has a special orientation program to decide in what grade the child belongs and to be assigned a "pal" of his own age to aid in his adjustment. An attempt is also made to discourage parents from unnecessary shuttling that interrupts the child's schooling.

Transiency is also characteristic of many multiproblem families. The overcrowded, substandard housing where many are forced to live has nothing innately desirable about it, and the result is a great deal of random movement, undertaken in the hope of somewhat improved living conditions. Unfortunately, housing and slum clearance programs have added to transiency in many cities. Through poor planning and phasing and inadequate relocation aid, many families have moved from one renewal site to another for years. Since housing supply has not yet caught up with need, inadequate dwellings and neighborhoods become even more so as displaced families crowd in.

Community agencies, and especially the schools, could probably improve their social services for the orientation of newcomers. Indeed, such help would probably be of benefit to all Americans on the move, even though they are not from deprived rural backgrounds. While a useful adjunct, this kind of help cannot, however, provide stability in employment, the lack of which

is implicated in much random movement. In this connection, the public employment service operates a clearance system, by which workers in one area can be informed of openings in another. This program is inadequate and even cumbersome; much could be done, especially through the use of electronic data processing and retrieval systems, to improve this service, but it cannot create jobs for unskilled in-migrants any more than other programs of service.

SOME GENERAL IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING

Assuming that any migration brings problems of adjustment, the kinds of program intervention that arise to meet these problems varies according to the leading idea around which the problem is conceptualized. Thus, programs may seek to prepare the rural in-migrant and other deprived individuals for work in the city; to strengthen his family life; to counter the discrimination he encounters; to teach him to read and write; to motivate him. Each such program implies a specific deficit for which the new community seeks to compensate. The way the program is formulated may, however, serve better as an insight to the mind of the program-maker and how he sees the problem than it does to illuminate the issues involved.

The way the problem is posed not only establishes the framework for action; it may also set strict limits on action. Those housing officials and landlords, for example, who have been preoccupied with property maintenance, have seemed to reduce the problems of the in-migrant to the proper disposal of garbage; while social welfare workers, immersed in the details of how to handle welfare budgets wisely, have turned program into the transmission of the details of a respectable life-style.

While few programs are so severely limited, there is some tendency to dwell on symptomatology, rather than to deal with the examination of certain basic policy questions. The treatment of one problem may serve only to uncover another, leaving the community to begin yet another attack. As more and more program elements are added together, and as program becomes thereby more sophisticated, the institutional barriers to success loom larger. The most important task may seem to be teaching English to Spanish-speaking in-migrants. If this is accomplished, however, school curricula may somehow be inadequate to impart standard education to this same in-migrant population. As these questions are attacked, it becomes apparent that the transition to adulthood cannot be successfully made without some specific preparation for work. But even after completion of an occupational training program, especially if it has provided only minimal skills, the in-migrant must then face the realities of the tight employment market that has characterized the last number of years. In a word, as individuals are somehow taught, cajoled, motivated, or pressured into meeting certain norms, both as to behavior and as to skill, there remain certain malfunctions of the major institutions to plague him and his community. If indeed, as much programming were organized as could conceivably be imagined, the core institutional problems would only stand out in even higher relief.

This is not to say that programs for better adjustment to urban life should be discontinued, but rather that in judging their efficacy, the

observer should keep in mind the following kinds of questions:

1. Does the program concentrate too much on what is detail rather than central difficulty?

2. Is it successful in terms of its own limited goals?

3. If it is successful in these terms what barriers stand in the way of the successful adjustment of the individuals who have been involved in it?

4. Does the program obscure rather than highlight the basic issues which the community must face?

The implication of these questions is that an analysis of programs currently being offered should lead to more than an enumeration of how many participants improved along any single continuum. Rather it can point the way to the next steps that need to be taken.

FOOTNOTES

1. U. S. Department of Labor, Office of Manpower, Automation and Training. "Young Workers: Their Special Training Needs," Manpower Research, Bulletin No. 3, May 1963, p. 10.

2. Wayland, Sloan R. "Old Problems, New Faces, and New Standards," Education in Depressed Areas, edited by A. Harry Passow, New York: Teachers College Bureau of Publications, 1963, p. 51.

3. Gans, Herbert J. "Social and Physical Planning for the Elimination of Poverty." Paper delivered at Conference of the American Institute of Planners, October 17, 1962.

4. Manpower Research, Bulletin No. 3, op. cit., p. 10.

5. This program was originally financed by the Ford Foundation as one of the Great Cities projects. Each community chose its own program emphasis; Milwaukee, having experienced in-migration from the South relatively recently, chose to deal with it in this fashion. The new project seems to have built on a long-time characteristic of the Milwaukee elementary schools, the ungraded primary.

6. A full description of this program appears in Do You Understand...ME? Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, 1961.

7. Deutsch, Martin P. "The Disadvantaged Child and the Learning Process." Education in Depressed Areas, op. cit., pp.163-179. This volume contains a number of essays dealing with both theory and programming in this field.

8. Similar action programs have been launched in other cities and by other institutions. Baltimore is experimenting with preschool children; the Pennsylvania State Department of Education is now supporting a series of enrichment demonstrations in smaller towns throughout the State; Teachers College (Columbia University) has established an institute for work of this kind.

9. The discussion of employment programs draws on the current work of the Youth-Work Program Review Project of the National Committee on Employment of Youth, which will publish several monographs dealing with this subject by the end of 1963. For some descriptive examples of program, see "Help for Out-of-Work Youth, A Manual for a Job Preparation Program in Your Community," National Committee on Employment of Youth, 1963.

10. These are, in the main, programs developed through the granting process of the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime.

11. Division of Pupil Welfare and Adjustment, St. Louis Public Schools. A Study of Attitudes of Parents of Children in Public Elementary Schools of St. Louis Toward School Attendance, St. Louis, Missouri: St. Louis Public Schools, September 1962, p. 50.