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PROGRAMS FOR RURAL YOUTH--ARE THEY DOING THE JOB.

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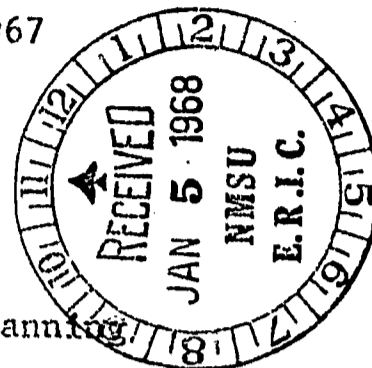
SINCE 1900, RURAL AMERICA HAS EXPERIENCED AN AIMLESS TRANSITION. PRIOR TO THAT DATE, A WELL ESTABLISHED PATTERN HAD EVOLVED WHICH INCLUDED THE DIVISION OF THE LAND AREA INTO FAMILY FARM UNITS AND TOWNS, WITH SMALL CITIES EMERGING AS TRADE AND SERVICE CENTERS FOR THE FARM POPULATION. DURING THIS PERIOD OF TRANSITION, HOWEVER, CHANGES HAVE BEEN MADE WHICH HAVE NOT ALWAYS REPRESENTED PROGRESS, UNTIL TODAY IT HAS BECOME EVIDENT THAT IF RURAL SOCIETY IS TO PROGRESS, DECISIONS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE WHICH WILL ENRICH PEOPLE'S LIVES AND FOSTER THE WELL BEING OF THE NATION. THE STRENGTH OF THE CHURCH IN THE AREA OF RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS NOT FOUND IN ITS OWN ACTION PROGRAMS, BUT IN ITS SUPPORT AND CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM OF COMMUNITY STRUCTURES, INSTITUTIONS, AND AGENCIES HAVING A RESPONSIBILITY IN THAT DEVELOPMENT. A PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH IS TO HELP MAN ACCEPT HIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, WHICH WILL ULTIMATELY RESULT IN THE CORRECTION OF PRESENT DEFICIENCIES IN RURAL YOUTH PROGRAMS AND PROMOTE PROGRESS IN THE LATTER PART OF THE 20TH CENTURY. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-25, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

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PROGRAMS FOR RURAL YOUTH - ARE THEY DOING THE JOB?

Church Programs

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We begin with a comment about the topic, "Church Programs," which does not fit the things that I believe I should say as a churchman. The church's main contribution is in the area of providing a pastoral ministry to people. Its various programs are incidental to this ministry.

I have the conviction that the church serves best not by having its own action program in the area of community development, but by being supportive and constructively critical of community structures, institutions, and agencies that have a responsibility to develop a countryside that gives real opportunity and that appeals to youth.

For example, the churches are in need of a continuing education program which gives pastors and lay leaders an adequate understanding of the social, economic, and political structures and forces in the countryside. Therefore, the church has called and is calling on state universities to provide continuing education to meet this need. By way of another example, the church supports the Hill-Burton approach in providing and maintaining health facilities but sees its main role in ministering to the ill.

I, therefore, see the church as an institution, on the one hand, having a limited involvement in community activities. On the other hand, I see the church broadening its community concern. Its concern for people ought to be as broad as God's concern for people. When feasible, it will express its social concerns through community structures. This approach assumes that the church will be sensitive to all unmet needs, be aware of the social structures designed to meet these needs, and encourage its laymen to participate in the community programs that provide them opportunity to express their concerns. I am, therefore, addressing myself to the topic: Are We Getting the Job Done--A Churchman's Point of View.

At the turn of the century, the first patterns of rural America had been established. In a relatively short time the Indians were dispossessed and a vast land area was divided into family farm units, and towns and small cities emerged as trade and service centers for the farm population. Political systems, including state and township governments, were established. A network of primitive roads laid out and a continental system

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of railroads formed to haul farm produce to market. Millions of people scattered across the landscape--30 million living on the farm and another 15 million in trade centers.

Since the turn of the century, rural America has experienced an aimless transition. It has been changing but it has not been developing. Changes came as a result of extensive and efficient use of tools and machines. It made possible the continued exportation of material and human resources from rural areas. But the improvement of the quality of life in the American countryside is not keeping pace with the rest of the country.

The Answer Is No

Thus the answer to the question, "Are we doing the job?" is a forthright, "No."

As long as alternate courses of action are open to people, they will be initiating change. This is the way we want it. However, we must not equate change with progress. Changes in a free democracy are the result of choices people have made. But the question can be asked, "Have viable alternate courses of action been available to people in the countryside?" Furthermore, it is naive to assume that the people always make the right choices, or that a trend always moves all sections of the nation in the direction of excellency in community living.

There is the question, "What criteria do people use to make their choices?" If rural society is to progress, decisions that are made must enrich people's lives, make viable community living possible, and foster the well-being of the nation.

That we are not doing the job is evidenced by the exodus of youth from the countryside. Youth is not interested in spending its life in a town or small city which has a declining number and variety of jobs open to them, which offers the poorest quality of education for children, which offers virtually no cultural life outside second-rate movies, and which gives little promise of new industry and therefore no capital improvements. Hence rural youth has no alternative but to leave.

The religious groups, educational institutions, voluntary organizations, and key citizens, all have done their part to increase the aspirations of young people. However, they have done very little to make it possible for young people to fulfill their aspirations in the countryside. Leaders have called for the effective use of technology to increase production of food and fiber. There has not been the same encouragement in the use of technology so that rural communities could offer alternate courses of economic employment.

Responsibility of the Church

The basic responsibility of the church to its community is to provide the

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community with a meaningful worship service. If it fails in this, it fails youth and adults alike. While the form of worship will vary, two basic elements are necessary for a meaningful worship experience:

1. Divine confrontation of man with his responsibility. The divine confrontation has the quality of making real the presence of God, his acts in history, and God coming to man.
2. Man's response to divine confrontation. An adequate response is three dimensional: It represents growth in man's relationship to God, in man's relationship to other people, and in man's relationship to his environment. Significant growth in his relationship to others and his environment is possible only when the socio-economic structures for expressing these relationships are adequate. The congregation to my mind is the most viable structure we have to confront people with a divine message, but in this period of history it may not be the most viable structure to carry out the implication of a message from God.

Since in many sections of the country quality relationships between people and between neighborhoods in the countryside do not exist, and since young people have not been provided with adequate opportunities for alternate forms of economic employment, we are led to conclude that either the church's message of confrontation has been too limited or the laymen have been very unimaginative in their response or the people in charge of our health, education, economic and civic resources have not provided the citizens with adequate structures through which they could respond.

Countryside Deficiencies

It is not for me to place blame; but it is for me to call attention to deficiencies that exist in the countryside, that hinder people in developing the type of communities which attract youth. I list the following deficiencies:

1. We have no up-to-date and objective evaluation of the significance of the non-metropolitan areas, which include 98 percent of the land area and 70 million people, living in the open country and in 16,000 towns and cities of varying size. These towns or cities are the economic centers and gateways to nearly all the land area and natural resources. This area needs to be understood for its own sake, for the potential it offers for solving many of the nation's current and domestic problems, and for the new opportunities it makes available to people who seek space, privacy, and beauty.

"Modern power, economics, transportation, and community have now joined the convenience of the city to the wider freedom of the land and the gadarene rush to the city is taking place in America just when life in the countryside is its very best," says James Reston.

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2. We lack viable planning units. The countryside will not develop to its full potential until the vast non-metropolitan areas are delineated into viable planning areas. This is being done in some states and leaders need to be aware of it and explore the feasibility of using the planning areas as the basis of developing the countryside. This, of course, will mean that neighborhoods and small cities will need to see themselves as being a part of one area complex and that they need to work together in the interest of developing the area.
3. We lack a doctrine or strategy of adjustment. We have a doctrine of expansion and support this doctrine with research, budgets, and specially-trained staff. Since society has not developed a doctrine of adjustment, people have no rationale for dealing with their declining communities. Therefore, the closing of a school is failure to them. If people had the benefit of a doctrine of adjustment they could regard the liquidation of the small towns as "mission accomplished."

In the community where machines are doing the work of men, where capital is replacing people, which means less members for the local church and less children for the school, society has no adequate concept of adjustment. The changes tend to take place unnoticed. A few families move away each year. Those who remain absorb the cost--the per capita cost of social services goes up. This continues until a crisis point is reached. Then a major decision needs to be made. People face a situation they have never faced before: They need to make a major adjustment. This means they need:

- a. A new outlook.
- b. A positive attitude toward decline which society tends to regard as negative.
- c. The courage to examine their loyalties.
- d. The ability to create new forms.
- e. The willingness to face up to reality.

Most people living in areas of major adjustment fall short to a degree in all five points.

There is a right way and a wrong way of helping people with their problems of adjustment. "In general people have difficulty understanding these kinds of ideas, not because they are difficult but because they do not want to understand them. If they are forced to face up to the problems, they tend to transfer their

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"dislikes to the problems to the person that is forcing them to regard seriously what they would prefer to ignore," states Herman Kahn in "On Thermo-Nuclear War," Chapter VII.

4. We do not have enough educational programs that are designed to give key leaders in local communities the capability adequately to appraise the changes that are taking place, to see the significance of the emerging viable planning areas, and to identify the social ingredients that make for quality community living. When these types of educational programs are available, they often are not accessible to local key leaders.
5. People lack a social structure for putting a price tag on human energy. When a farmer buys additional or better tools to multiply his human energy, we say he is substituting capital for labor. In fact, he is buying the human energy expended in the production of the tools; he is exchanging his own human energies for the human energies of others.

Because our society is made up of selfish individuals, they will seek to put as high a price tag as possible on their own energy and as low a price tag as possible on the energy of the persons whose products they are buying. If the exchange were just between individuals, the discipline of free exchange would eliminate the person who overprices his energy.

The exchange is between individuals and groups. Well organized groups are in a position, as a group, to put a price tag on the human energy that their individual members expend. The poorly organized groups are not in a position to do this; consequently, they get less wages than they deserve. This is currently true of the persons directly or indirectly engaged in agriculture. It affects the entire rural sector of our population which is not in a position or not willing or not able to put itself into a position so it can put an adequate price tag on human energy expended in rural areas.

Therefore, people, especially young people, leave rural areas and go to urban areas where they can market their human energy at a higher price. Unless the people in the rural sector can find a way to sell their human energy at a price that is competitive with the price that human energy is sold in urban areas, rural areas will continue to decline.

Industry that moves into rural areas, because human energy can be had for less, in the long run will be a curse rather than a blessing to the countryside.

6. We lack enterprising individuals and corporations with capital

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who are willing to make use of technology in a way that will increase economic opportunities for people in the rural areas. If the social problems and the pollution problems created by mass concentration of industry were charged against the private sector rather than the public sector, technological developments in the countryside might be in a competitive position.

7. We lack a national policy that will give us a balance between urban and rural population. We can have too many people in a given area in ratio to the resources available in the area or we can have too few people in an area in ratio to the resources available. The goal is a balance between the population and the resources available in the area. But no guidelines have been established that will move the nation in this direction. As a result some areas are overpopulated and other areas are underpopulated.

Fixing Responsibilities

We need to fix the responsibilities for eliminating these deficiencies:

1. Research and educational institutions have a responsibility to address themselves to the question, "What do we want the American countryside to be like?" They should be projecting plans for a model countryside community similar to model cities.
2. Private and public capital has a responsibility to develop the countryside. Investment directs the flow of people. It creates economic opportunity. We have worked with the assumption that the urban society can absorb all the people who come and that rural society cannot support the people it now has. Is this assumption supported by research? How many people could the countryside support if a fair share of the material and human resources produced in the countryside were invested in the countryside to provide new economic opportunities for youth?
3. People with special gifts and talents have a responsibility. The countryside produces its share of creative persons and dynamic leaders. However, their expenditure of effort is largely in response to economic incentives. The end result is the countryside is deprived of a fair share of the nation's talent and dynamic leadership. It gives us ghettos of limited talent in the low-income areas.
4. People in the countryside have a responsibility. Society has encouraged rural people to cling to a value system which militates against doing significant community planning. People hesitate to make a commitment to long-range community goals that are in conflict with immediate individual goals.

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5. Religious groups have a basic responsibility. These groups need to confront people with the sober truth that they are responsible to God for the decisions they make in every area of life. This is God's world and not man's world! Man is God's steward and will need to give an account of his stewardship of the countryside. People cannot transfer their responsibility for decision making to society in general or to organizations to which they belong. God does not hold organizations responsible, he holds individuals responsible. Jesus emphasizes that we must act responsibly in word and deed. The neighbor is always the individual for whom I am personally responsible and who conversely is responsible for me. The categories of good and evil presuppose a sense of obligation which is meaningful only if man lives in relationship to the God who cannot be impressed by economic laws, mechanical necessity, or the claims of social superiority.

Signs of Hope

While I honestly believe that we are not getting the job done fast enough, I still want to conclude my remarks with a word of hope.

What Leaders Are Saying

Key people are beginning to give us a new type of leadership. Mr. W. B. Murphy, President of Campbell Soup Company, has stated, "It is in order to suggest that...manufacturers can do themselves a favor and our country a service by allocating a fair share of their new plants to the rural areas. This picture of greater and greater population concentration is to me unpleasant and expensive, and I would hope, not inevitable. It makes for a more impersonal existence, higher taxes, more government controls, and in most ways what can be considered a distorted existence, at least by the standards we know today."

Former Secretary of Commerce J. C. Connor states: "There have been suggestions that the Federal Government should explore every possible means of providing incentives for locating plants away from the big cities. And I think that the growing congestion in our cities will force even more action than taken to date. The result could be the rebirth of small-town America."

Secretary of Agriculture, Orville L. Freeman, is repeatedly calling upon the nation to give realistic attention to the needs of developing the countryside.

This type of emphasis meets with the approval of urban leaders.

Mayor John V. Lindsay of New York City writes, "Our cities exact too much from those who live in them. They are not only increasingly expensive places in which to live or work; more and more, the price of city living is being paid by a sacrifice of fundamental personal freedoms."

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What People Are Doing

In many areas, private citizens are taking the initiative to develop the countryside. Ervin Wenske, a Nebraska farmer, has taken an empty set of farm buildings and has developed them into a hunting lodge and a farm-vacation lodge. The lodge is located four miles north of Edgar, just off Highway 74. It is not visible from the road, is nestled behind a hill among trees near the Big Sandy. It is ideal for a restful vacation. It gives seclusion, privacy, good hunting, and fellowship with a farm family.

In Minnesota we have a case of area initiative. "The people of five Minnesota counties are prodding dormant economic opportunities into life through a Resource Conservation and Development project. They're working toward more jobs, more trade, and a 'flock' of tourists every summer for Swift, Polk, Kandiyohi, and Wadena Counties and the eastern portion of Otter Tail County.

"A glimmer of things to come is the Crow Wing Trail in Wadena County, a lively local project that is the first of the 80-odd separate measures in the West Central Minnesota RC&D master plan to reach fruition.

"In a speech dedicating the Canoe Trail on June 17, 1965, Minnesota Governor Karl Rolvaag called it 'one of the most exciting contributions to the art of resource management in our State's history.'"

Sylvia Porter in a syndicated column recently wrote a piece under the topic, "Small Towns Fight to Live." In this article she reports two incidents of countryside development. "A 10-county area in southern Iowa, which calls itself TENCO, has pooled its resources--inexpensive land for business, trainable manpower, recreation facilities, and experienced business and government leaders--to attract new industry, plan for the future, build educational and leisure facilities, expand its agricultural base and develop a comprehensive manpower recruiting-training program (including an impressive new technical school). One county has doubled its family income and quadrupled its job opportunities.

"A seven-county area near Tupelo, Mississippi, with a population of about 25,000 has been transformed by enlightened businessmen and community leaders into a dynamic, growing center of trade and industry. Since 1950 the number of manufacturing jobs has shot up from 7,000 to more than 23,500. Payrolls, retail sales, bank deposits and population, all are up nearly ten-fold in the period. Today, the Tupelo area boasts an economically healthy variety of industry. Tupelo also now has extensive manpower and on-the-job training facilities and a medical center training program.

"The key point underlined by these two examples is that our rural towns and small cities can survive when they combine their resources and talents, and invest their imagination and funds to develop long-range plans for growth. They can become preferred areas in which to live, when they add the essentials of educational, cultural, and medical facilities to their

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"built-in advantages of clean air and elbow room--for wherever all these are, will come people and jobs."

A Time to Act

Two-thirds of the 20th century is gone. For the American countryside it has been a period of purposeless transition. Change is not bad, but change is not enough to build community. Aimless change gets people nowhere. If the 20th century is not to see the liquidation of community life in vast areas of our nation, then the rural sector of our society needs to develop a quality countryside that will present America's youth with attractive alternatives for employment and opportunities to enjoy quality living.

The commitment of citizens and organizations to what is envisioned must take precedence over their self-interests. The rural sector is now a minority. But a minority that knows what it needs, has a sense of true unity, is committed to its goals, and is desirous to be a responsible minority can be an influential force. A committed minority can see to it that the last third of this century will see the American countryside achieve purpose and generate a genuine interest in the development of meaningful community life for people.