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DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL AMERICA

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The time for rural development has come. In my judgment there are at least two good reasons why this appears to be so. First, the need for attention and action has reached a level of urgency that can no longer be denied or ignored. Second, both the executive and legislative branches of our federal government are giving this matter substantial attention and support. Both are supportive of actions and programs that give promise of progress and accomplishment. And now let us examine the evidence in support of these two contentions.

THE NEED IS URGENT

A report prepared by a White House National Goals Research Staff entitled "Toward Balanced Growth: Quantity with Quality," released July 4, 1970, indicates that the time has come when national policies and programs that will result in a better balance in the distribution of our population must be developed. To be more specific and to the point, policies must be developed that will lead to a better distribution of our population between rural and urban areas.

The indications are that if present trends continue, as many as 80 percent of the people in the United States will be living in four places by the year 2000. One of these places will be along the Eastern Seaboard from Virginia northward to Massachusetts. A second will be in Florida. A third will be along the Pacific Coast from San Diego northward to San Francisco. The fourth will be in the heartland of our nation—beginning at Milwaukee extending southward to Chicago and eastward to Pittsburgh. The likelihood of such intensified population concentrations is a matter of deep and increasing concern to more and more individuals and groups. Many are now saying that our larger cities have already become so large that they are politically unmanageable, socially intolerable, and economically inefficient. Problems relating to pollution control and waste disposal, congestion and transportation paralysis, inadequate housing, fire protection, and increasing crime are becoming so complex that they appear to defy solution.

And what is happening to the rest of our nation—to rural America? Census information for the decade of the sixties indicates that half of all of the counties in our nation lost population during that period. Another third of the counties just about held their own, neither gaining nor losing significant numbers of people.

As people move away in search of opportunity elsewhere, the capacity to support viable communities goes with them. If we are to halt or slow down or, hopefully, even reverse the current movement of people from rural to urban areas, a major requirement will be to find the means to increase the number of jobs and improve the quality of life in rural communities. People will live where jobs are available. With the increasing efficiency of modern agriculture, the available jobs in many rural areas have been decreasing. What is needed is new industries to locate in rural areas—not transplanted industries but rather, new industries—to help maintain a better balance of opportunity between rural and urban areas. There is also the urgent need in many rural communities for certain amenities that are available elsewhere—such as sewer and water systems, libraries, good schools, adequate health facilities, opportunities for recreation, and other facilities that many of us now take for granted.

There are many important components to current problems and many factors to be considered in finding solutions. For instance, youth must be involved and their interests must be served. The same can be said for minority groups and the disadvantaged in both the rural areas and in urban situations.

Resources must be fully utilized in accordance with approved management practices. Many resources—forests, fish, and wildlife, grasslands, rivers, lakes, and streams—up to now represent underdeveloped or at the very most only partially developed resources in an otherwise highly developed, industrialized, rapidly urbanizing nation. Too often in the past these great natural resources have been treated more like nonrenewable resources for immediate economic gain rather than like the renewable resources they really are. We know now that if properly developed for multiple use, they can serve for recreational purposes as well as for direct economic gain.

INTEREST AND CONCERN OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

As evidence of the interest and concern of both the executive and legislative branches of government, I would call attention to the following:

1. The previously mentioned White House National Goals Staff report entitled "Toward Balanced Growth: Quantity with Quality." This report emphasizes the need for policies and programs that will lead to a better balance in the growth of our nation.

2. The report of a presidential task force composed of some of our country's leading citizens entitled "A New Life for the Country." One of the recommendations of this task force was streamlining

federal programs and strengthening state and local participation as necessary steps in rural development. In pointing to ways of obtaining adequate rural development, the task force indicated that, "National policies that lead to full employment, fiscal soundness and control of inflation are essential for an expanding economy and vigorous rural growth."

3. The establishment of a Domestic Council of Cabinet Officers by the president, and the creation of a subcommittee on rural development within this council. The Domestic Council has been assigned the responsibility for developing national policies that will lead to the orderly development of the nation's resources with the aim of achieving prosperity for all segments of our economy.

4. The attitude of Congress toward rural development. This attitude is clearly indicated by the following statement which appears in Title IX of the Agricultural Act of 1970: "Congress commits itself to a sound balance between rural and urban America. The Congress considers this balance so essential to the peace, prosperity and welfare of all our citizens that the highest priority must be given to the revitalization and development of rural areas."

5. The strong support of the Secretary of Agriculture.

6. The high priority consideration given rural development by the president in his special revenue sharing proposals and in his plans for reorganization of the executive branch of the federal government.

7. The establishment of a Senate Subcommittee on Rural Development. This is a subcommittee of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

8. Lengthy hearings on rural development by the Agriculture Committee of the House of Representatives held during most of the month of July.

WHAT IS RURAL DEVELOPMENT?

Rural development is not a program. This has been a common misconception, in fact, a deterrent to action and progress. Rural development is a process. It is a process which involves:

Government at all levels—federal, state, and local.

The private sector.

Resources—social, political, human, and natural.

The people—those for whom and by whom rural development will be accomplished.

All of these must be brought together, to interact and to be made

to function in a way that will bring new prosperity and an environment of well-being to thousands of rural communities throughout our nation. The most important component of this process is the people who live in the communities throughout the nation. Unless they want something to happen, nothing will happen. However, once they decide what they want for their community, and proceed to form an appropriate partnership with their government or the private sector, they can very well be on their way to achieving their goals and objectives. This, then, is rural development—a process, not a program. It is people motivated to a point of action and their government working together for better communities—communities that contain the necessary amenities to make them good places in which to live.

THE ROLE OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

I come now to the matter of the role of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities in rural development. To get at the point I wish to make here, I want to go back to the time that Abraham Lincoln was president. At that time, there were leaders in our country who believed that if our nation was to become a great nation, if it was to reach its full and ultimate potential, it had to have a strong, viable agriculture. You all know the story of what happened as well as I do so I will not repeat it in any great detail. Suffice it to say that legislation was passed in 1862 creating the Department of Agriculture and providing the basis for the establishment of the system of land-grant universities we have today. The land-grant universities developed strong colleges of agriculture with their resident teaching, research, and extension functions. Over the years the major focus and thrust of both the Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities has been to design programs to serve the farm family.

However, as time went on factors outside the farm gate assumed a level of importance requiring serious attention, and as a result, marketing programs, agricultural economics programs, farm credit programs, rural sociology programs, public affairs programs, forestry programs, and others were added to the roster of disciplines in the Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities. But even so, I think it can be said that these additional programs are related to the farm and farm-related industries and that the primary aim of the Department of Agriculture and the colleges of agriculture in our land-grant universities is still primarily that of helping the farm family.

Today our nation is at another crossroad, confronted with another crisis—a crisis which some are saying has placed us on a collision

course with disaster unless it can be resolved. I am referring now to the problems which are resulting because of overcrowding and congestion in our metropolitan areas and of the deterioration, due to out-migration, of our rural communities.

We are now confronted with the same challenges and opportunities to serve rural communities in the years immediately ahead, as we had in 1862, at which time we were brought into existence to serve the needs of the farmer and his family. I want to make the point here that rural development is an important component of an over-all policy of balanced growth, and it should be regarded in that light rather than as something apart from and competitive with urban development, urban problems, and urban resources.

I would suggest to you that there is no segment of government which is better prepared, or that is more knowledgeable, or that has more ability and more skill, to take this assignment on than the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the land-grant universities. Because of its importance to the future of our nation somebody is going to be tapped to provide the leadership role for rural development. I think it can and should be us.