

THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:
A HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF RURAL POLICY
UNDER THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION AND
ITS APPLICATION TO THE "FARM CRISIS" OF THE 1980'S

by

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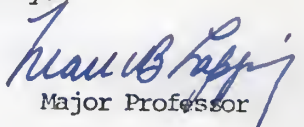
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Rural America in the 1980's has witnessed many of the same challenges and pressures that it did in the late 1950's including net out-migration, an aging population, and a decline in the importance of agriculture in the rural economy. In both decades a Republican served two terms as president, D. D. Eisenhower during the 1950's and Ronald Reagan in the 1980's. Political philosophies in both instances were based on neo-conservatism underlain by a "laissez faire" ideology and a commitment to governmental decentralization. Federal policy placed heavy reliance on the private sector as opposed to public interventions.

The rural crisis of the 1980's is similar to that of the 1950's. Small- and medium-sized farmers are faced with financial dilemmas and overwhelming competition from the larger, family farms and corporate farmers. Moreover, the survival of many small towns, particularly in the Midwest, is very much in question.

In response to the growing economic and social problems of rural America, President Eisenhower made an appeal, in his January 11, 1954 Special Message to Congress, that the federal government pay special attention to those concerns unique to small farmers.¹ His address contrasted with the Truman administration's rural and agricultural policy in that it focused on small farmers and low-income rural persons as opposed to commercial agriculture.² In his speech, President Eisenhower stated:

". . . the chief beneficiaries of our farm programs have been the 2 million larger, more productive farm units. Production on nearly 3 million other farms is so limited that the families there on benefit only in small degree from the type of programs that

heretofore have dominated our activities . . ."

President Eisenhower also charged the Secretary of Agriculture and the National Agricultural Advisory Commission with the responsibility to complete a report covering the concerns of low income farmers.³

Undoubtedly, Eisenhower's concern for rural America had its roots in his own small town upbringing and the Republican voting nature of much of the countryside.

Entitled "Development of Human Resources" (April 22, 1955), the report noted that the concept of income, as the major criterion, was too limiting in its scope. The authors found that the issue was an extremely complicated one, involving underemployment of labor and resources, poor living conditions, and economic blight, together with a deeply rooted problem in "human values -- the lives and welfare of people and of families . . .".⁴ Based on the findings and recommendations of this report, the Eisenhower Administration created the Rural Development Program (RDP).

The RDP was the first comprehensive rural development program sponsored by a Federal government. The program utilized the private sector as well as civic and other community organizations in a cooperative effort to help educate, train, and provide economic opportunities for "qualified" rural persons. Comprehensive action was also taken to improve local "quality of life." By emphasizing the use of the private sector, the program was again somewhat consistent with contemporary conservative political thought and economics.

Due to the historical parallels between the late 1950's and the 1980's, the Rural Development Program, formulated under the Eisenhower

Administration, provides communities in the 1980's with ideas, background and strategies for dealing with today's rural crisis. The economic, political, and philosophical base that created a favorable environment for the establishment of the RDP will be examined and placed into a larger historical context. An account of the 1980's, focusing on some of the same issues, will also be included so that the two eras can be compared and contrasted.

A thorough literature review of the program will also be necessary. The review will describe the role that the following played in the RDP:

1. Government
 - A. Federal
 - B. State
 - C. Local
2. Independent Agencies
3. Private Organizations
 - A. Civic Groups
 - B. Churches
 - C. Businesses
 - D. Farm and Work Organizations

Next, the thesis will discuss the nature, successes, and challenges of the various RDP activities. In these accounts, the cooperative effort of the various groups, organizations, and officials will be depicted. In addition, innovative development and its potential to be integrated into today's economic and resource planning efforts, will be assessed.

As a grassroots program, the individual programs were tailored to reflect a community's strengths and needs. The local RDP programs were coordinated by RDP agents that were appointed at the county level. RDP agents were to involve many sectors in the program in an effort to allow

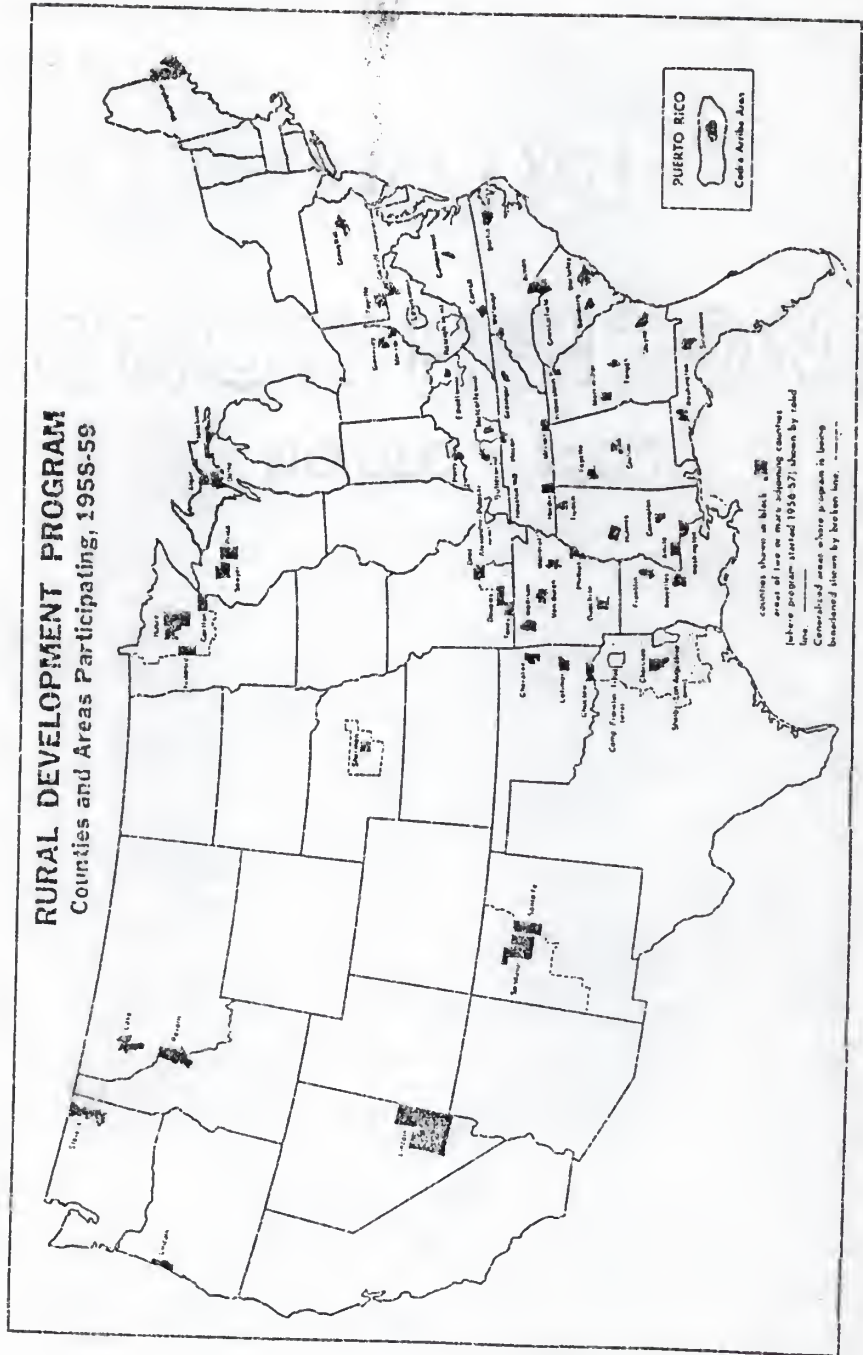
rural localities the opportunity to enrich intra-community networking. A program of this nature was also attractive to the private sector because it helped to stimulate the economy by encouraging industry, value-added production, and the enhancement of human capital. Both planners and public administrators could benefit from studying the RDP as it outlined various avenues from economic development and quality of life improvement. In addition, the RDP also offered a unique approach to implementation of program goals.

Literature describing the program's organization, goals, philosophical basis, and outcomes can be found at the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, KS. The literature includes RDP Annual Reports, minutes from various RDP conferences, newsletters, and congressional hearings concerning the RDP. Finally, an informal telephone survey was conducted between August and September, 1988 with former RDP agents. A geographical cross-section of counties was selected for surveying purposes. While certain questions were used as a guideline for the interview, participants were free to share any pertinent information. These "oral histories" provided valuable insight into actual programs "on the ground."

RDP Program Definition

Upon receipt of Agricultural Secretary Ezra Taft Benson's report, Congress passed a bill to appropriate additional funds for the Cooperative Extension to work with low income families. This became the Rural Development Program.⁵ Because the program centered on rural development, as opposed to strictly agricultural development, it offered a more comprehensive approach to the rural problem.⁶ Rural development

focused on low income families with low levels of educational attainment which limited their participation in local groups, politics, and within the county.⁷ Additional problems in many rural areas included dense rural settlement with high birth rates and few outside jobs. Also, in some areas steep topography and other natural conditions hindered the adoption of modern farming techniques. Finally, hard labor as opposed to mechanized labor, low education, and share cropping were often predominant in lower income rural areas.⁸ Thus, the Rural Development Program permitted program coordinators to move beyond the boundaries of the farm and the home unit in order to encompass a variety of actors including national, state, and local governmental offices, the private sector, educational institutions, religious and civic groups.⁹ The program, therefore, utilized community forces, which involved public and private cooperation in an comprehensive effort to bring about rural development.¹⁰ Low-income regions on which the RDP concentrated included the Appalachian Mountains area, Southern Piedmont and Coastal Plains, S.E. Hilly Areas of the Mississippi Delta, S.W. Sandy Coastal Area, the Ozarks, Areas in the Northern Lake States, Northwest New Mexico, the Cascades, and the Northern Rockies.¹¹ The Program operated under the assumption that while the government did not have the right to interfere with " . . . the American philosophy that each individual make his own decisions and set his own goals . . . ", it did have the responsibility to ensure that such opportunities were made available.¹² These provisions would have allowed local persons the chance to make decisions ". . . after they have been informed regarding the opportunities and possibilities - the philosophy of self determination



Source: RDP Handbook, 1959 p. 12

RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

NATIONAL

Committee for RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
 Under Secretary, Department of the Interior
 Under Secretary, Department of Agriculture (Chairman)
 Under Secretary, Department of Commerce
 Under Secretary, Department of Labor
 Under Secretary, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
 Administrator, Small Business Administration
 Member, Council of Economic Advisers

STATE

Rural Development Committee
 Representatives of
 Agricultural Extension Service
 Agricultural Experiment Station
 Forest Service (State)
 Farmers Home Administration
 Soil Conservation Service
 Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee
 Farm Credit District
 Farm Organizations
 Chamber of Commerce (State)
 Social Security Administration
 Department of Health
 Department of Education
 Employment Security Agency (State)
 Industrial Development Board
 (Other agencies and organizations as appropriate)

LOCAL

County Rural (or Resource) Development Committee
 Farmers
 Businessmen
 Farm organization representatives
 Civic leaders
 Church representatives
 Elected local government officials
 Physicians
 Housewives
 Farmer Co-op Officials
 News media representatives

Agency Advisory Committee
 Representatives of
 County Extension Service
 Soil Conservation Service
 ASC Committee
 Farmers Home Administration
 Vocational Agriculture Department
 Health Department
 Welfare Department
 Employment Security Office
 Schools Administration
 (Others as appropriate)

Subcommittees for --
 Agriculture
 Industrial Development
 Education
 Health and Welfare
 (Others as appropriate)

Chairman, with advice and assistance of Coordinator for Rural Development Program

Chairman, staff, and steering committee

Chairman, secretary and steering committee

This is a general outline of program organization; individual States and counties may differ in details.

and free enterprise backed by the interest and action of local people. This program preserves the priceless American principle of freedom of choice".¹³ Success of the program was dependant upon local "grass roots" participation which included the cooperation of local leaders and agency workers. In an effort to be consistent with then contemporary American political philosophy, the RDP was not intended to be a "governmental program".¹⁴

The following goal statement offers a general framework upon which the program was built.

I. Rural Economic Development

A. Improved education

1. Vocational training so that off the farm opportunities could be utilized on a part-time basis.
2. Extension services that would provide:
 - a. farm and home financial management information;
 - b. conservation, introduction of new enterprises, and modern farming techniques;
3. Improved secondary education and counseling in schools to aid rural youth in career opportunity.

4. Nutrition and health education

B. Industry and New Sources of Employment

1. Attempts to attract or start industries in rural areas so that small farmers could afford to farm on a part-time basis
2. Encourage rural persons to diversify goods and services:
 - a. tourism
 - b. forestry and mining
 - c. commercial crops in demand
3. Provide adequate training and credit

II. Quality of Life Improvements

- A. Increase infrastructure
- B. Availability of health clinics and facilities
- C. Support of community civic and religious organizations

Historical Factors that Shaped the RDP

There were several underlying factors which contributed both to the establishment and nature of the RDP. Motives that sparked the RDP reflected a concern in Washington for the plight of rural America as established by the "Development of Agriculture's Human Resources" report. Don Paarlberg, a federal participant in the program, maintains that these were not politically inspired and, therefore, they were not necessarily "sponsored" by special interest groups.¹⁵ In an effort to preserve rural America, the RDP was created to facilitate the technological, economic, and to some degree, social change that was taking place in rural areas during the 1950's which was perceived as a threat to many low-income families. Though the general overtone and thrust of the program was directly reflected by the political & economic views of the time, the program had had few strong advocates in Washington. The program was therefore faced with limited funds and support. Indifference, if anything, greeted the work of the RDP on the national level.

Technological Changes

A common assumption of the 1950's was that overall growth in output would be restricted by a lack of technological advancement.¹⁶ Agricultural mechanization began to increase after WW II with larger tractors and more efficient machinery, improved soil, planting, cultivating, harvesting, and storage were introduced and integrated into the farm economy.¹⁷ Agricultural researchers were responsible for producing new varieties of wheat & corn.¹⁸ Commercialization brought specialization, and it was now more profitable to specialize in one or

two crops as opposed to several. Farmers were becoming businessmen and managers as modern technology required expertise.¹⁹ The coming of mechanization also meant higher yields of crops with the use of far less labor. Markets were soon flooded with agricultural surpluses and prices "bottomed-out" as a result of over-production.²⁰ The demands on agriculture coupled with the low rate of return on crops created the conditions for a large exodus from farming. Between 1940 and 1955, the farm population dropped 27%. In 1940 the farm population was 30,500,000 as compared to 22,200,000 in 1955.²¹ In 1955 there were a total of 4,800,000 farms of which only 2,200,000 were considered full-time commercial operations.²² This was the obvious manifestation of rapid technological growth as too many people were employed in farming.²³

The poorer farmers had other basic problems to overcome in addition to those brought on by technological change. Most lacked such necessities as good land, access to capital for modernization, education and management skills essential for a commercial oriented operation.²⁴ The government policies of the time were geared toward the problems of the larger, modern operations.²⁵ Existing policy also failed to address the transition of displaced labor.²⁶ Further, not only did governmental policy ignore small farmers, but Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson went so far as to openly advocate getting the poorest families into non-agricultural employment. Benson believed it was not economically sound for so many to be farmers.²⁷

Despite Benson's opinion most believed it was "un-American", if not un-Christian, to establish any governmental policy that would encourage

or force people from the farm.²⁸ In an effort to deal humanely with the change brought about by agriculture technological advancement, the RDP was introduced. The program was to be consistent with the "American" philosophy and, thus, was founded on the principle that each individual makes his own decisions and set his own goals.²⁹

As a development program it could be helpful by introducing new farming and management techniques to those who wanted to stay in farming. The RDP could also aid many rural Americans in their transition from full-time farming to full- and/or part-time "off-the-farm" employment.³⁰ In addition, the RDP offered employment opportunities to the underemployed, low-income farm persons, and non-farm families, especially in depressed areas. Providing training and educational opportunities for rural persons was seen as central to any effort to bring about equality and boost the local economy.

The lack of education not only denied rural people the opportunity for "the good life", but it was even suggested that it made them more vulnerable to Marxist ideals. Education was seen as an important means to socialize and instill democratic values in citizens. As stated at the Jackson, MS. RDP Conference, "...the leaders of our country know that we are in a very serious war with Russia for the minds of men. One of the most important weapons in this war is the effective education of our young people. The Russians are going all out to develop this 'secret' weapon of war ...".³¹ In addition to education, it was also believed that democratic and Christian values were strongly embedded in rural living. This was a fairly common theme in the literature which evolved from the RDP. The family farm was seen as the "... bulwark of

Christianity and democracy...". The family farm was the soil from which the American way of life, the Constitution, and the laws of the United states took root".³² Thus, the preservation of rural living was, to some extent, perceived as part of the effort to sustain a piece of the American tradition. The idea that stronger education and the preservation of the rural lifestyle was to be a safeguard against Marxist thought was not a central theme of program implementors, according to Paarlberg.³³

While the RDP was a government sponsored program, it was to be implemented by the private sector. In addition, the program was to be flexible and decentralized in an effort to ensure local relevance and "grass roots" control.³⁴ The philosophy behind the RDP was also compatible with the current political views dominated the White House. Should the program be successful, it could be used as a "showpiece" for conservatives in the Southeast as the TVA had been for New Deal liberals. ³⁵

Not only was the RDP consistent with the Republican attitude on a political basis, but it was also reflective of it in budgetary terms. Government support was very limited since the program was to gain most of its momentum from community leaders. Thus, it was primarily the private sector which would organize and maintain the program in an effort to improve community facilities and economic conditions.³⁶ Such a program would help provide options for rural Americans, yet it would not force anyone off-the-farm. The major thrust of the RDP was to aid people during a period of rural transition while, at the same time, preserving the essence of a country lifestyle.

In addition to a modest budget, the RDP faced other political battles as it received limited support from Washington. As a grass roots, county-oriented program, it lacked political power at the Federal level. While the Federal departments and agencies cooperated with the RDP, the program lacked a strong and consistent commitment from Sec. of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson, and gained only "somewhat muted support" from D.D. Eisenhower.³⁷ Congressman Jamie L. Whitten of Mississippi, a key advocate of agricultural related policy, opposed the RDP claiming that it was "another program adopted by the Secretary of Agriculture as a substitute for adequate farm income".³⁸ Due to inconsistent support, RDP leaders were often reserved and conservative in their recommendations for the RDP.³⁹

Despite negative feed-back from Washington, Under Secretary of Agriculture Morse, who actually ran the program, remained genuinely committed to the RDP's goals and principles. He was constantly at odds with the more bureaucratic, and increasingly more consumer-oriented USDA.⁴⁰

While some key farming groups paid "lip service" to the RDP, it was often not in their interest to support the program. For instance, according to Paarlberg, the Farm Bureau did not favor the RDP because one of its objectives would be to move traditional low-cost laborers into better paying off-the-farm jobs. This would make it more expensive for the members of Farm Bureau to obtain the labor it requires because it would no longer be available.⁴¹ Paarlberg also stated that the Farmers Union, gained most of its momentum from stronger urban unions. Thus, its leaders did not support a program that would sustain rural

areas and viewed the RDP as largely irrelevant to the need to obtain the agricultural parity prices it had long sought.⁴²

The unique nature of the program, allowed many actors from the private sector to become involved with programs implementation. The church and various community civic groups and leaders, and other governmental agencies (excluding the USDA), were responsible for the majority of the program's success stories.

CHAPTER TWO
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

RDP ADMINISTRATORS, ACTORS, AND PARTICIPANTS

The program was organized at the federal level through the establishment of a principle coordinating committee consisting of the Under Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior, Commerce, Agriculture, Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare. Independent agencies included the Small Business Administration, Housing and Home Finance Agency, Farm Credit Administration, General Services Administration, and members of the President's Council of Economic Advisers.⁴³ While the group as a whole met periodically, its members assigned department personnel to serve on "working level" coordinating committees which met on a more regular basis. True Morse, Under Secretary of the Department of Agriculture, was chairman of the main committee, "The Committee for Rural Development Program". Morse's major task was to provide the program with direction. His coordinator, an executive aid to the Secretary of Agriculture, acted as a liaison for state committees and other interested groups, and as an advisor.⁴⁴

The Department of Commerce

The Department of Commerce, in coordination with state agencies and local businesses and civic leaders, helped to plan industrial and commercial growth.⁴⁵ The major apparatus used by the Department of Commerce in support of the RDP was the Office of Area Development.⁴⁶ The Office of Area Development had several responsibilities on both the national and state levels. On the national level, the responsibilities

were to assist area citizens, businesses, and farm groups in establishing new employment opportunities by:

- 1) offering advice concerning industrial location, development, requirements, industrial development corporations, and area economic analysis;
- 2) distributing information describing federal policies and programs that aid in community development;
- 3) serving as a clearing house for information concerning workable development approaches, methods, and ideas.⁴⁷

The Office of Area Development also worked through existing state development agencies in an effort to create contacts with local industries and businesses. Their activities included:

- 1) communication of various community program activities to spur establishments of rural industries;
- 2) gathering and distributing information on successful small industries in rural areas;
- 3) providing technical and market information from the Dept. of Commerce and other areas of the federal government concerning small industry development and operation;
- 4) providing state and county rural development programs with published technical literature concerning public offices that could be of assistance in the program;
- 5) consultation concerning economic development obstacles with program leaders.⁴⁸

Field offices of the Dept. of Commerce conducted similar projects in counties and areas in need of aid. Many field office managers were also members of the state RDP committees or attended meetings.⁴⁹

Department of Agriculture

This department provided staff assistance to the committee for RDP through the Secretary of Agriculture's office. General duties included organizing the federal committees that supported the program, developing a basic format for program operations, providing public

information, and securing favorable congressional relations.⁵⁰

Several agencies within the Dept. of Agriculture also contributed their resources. These included the Federal Extension Service, the Soil Conservation Service, the Forest Service, the Farmers' Home Administration, the Rural Electric Administration, the Farmer Cooperative Service, the Agricultural Research Service, and the Agricultural Marketing Service.

A. Federal Extension Service

Federal, state, and local extension services worked closely with other departments in an effort to establish the RDP.⁵¹ Much of the funding for extension work was made available through a 1955 amendment to Section 8 of the Smith-Lever Act which established four major responsibilities for the federal extension service:

- 1) On the farm educational assistance at the family level that focused on problem resolution.
- 2) Assistance to organizations in appraising resources for possible agricultural improvement, or to introduce industry in the area in an effort to compensate for farm income.
- 3) Employment services through cooperation with other agencies.
- 4) Advising families who want to make farming venture transitions.

The extension workers' general duties included:

- 1) conducting surveys, collecting research and identifying problems and areas;
- 2) coordinating, organizing, evaluating, and publicizing the committees' missions, with the aid of land-grant colleges, which was based on:
 - a. the development of human and natural resources;
 - b. increase employment opportunities;
 - c. development and expansion of farm markets;
 - d. support more youth counseling and occupational guidance;
 - e. expand educational opportunities.

B. Soil Conservation Service

The Soil Conservation Service provided data management and decision-making support through the use of such tools as soil maps and accompanying technical material. In addition, Soil Conservation Service technicians aided in the organization of state and county committees and in their planning efforts.⁵²

C. Forest Service

This service took part in the rural development program through its traditional channels and by creating joint ventures with state foresters. The tasks of the forest service include:

- 1) economic investigations;
- 2) national forest timber sales;
- 3) state and private forestry cooperation.⁵³

Under the state-federal cooperative Forest Management Act, the 24 states participating in the RDP program were provided with 198 service foresters who offered technical forest management aid to farms. Each assistant provided information concerning process and management to farmers and small forest products industries, in an assigned 2-5 county area.⁵⁴

D. Farmers' Home Administration

Traditionally, this program extended credit to full-time farmers who wanted to improve their farms and skills. In 1959, however, credit was also made available to part-time farmers who had other sources of employment.⁵⁵ The FMHA cooperated with groups on both the state and county level and offered advice on farm and money management, developing good farming techniques, and the provision of credit.⁵⁶ Loans offered by the FMHA fell into 4 different types:

- 1) operating expenses to improve land and labor resources.
- 2) Extension of farm land holdings and to refinance debts.
- 3) Soil and water conservation.
- 4) Farm house and other farm buildings and repair.

Because such loans were made available by local personnel, only persons who were turned down by private institutions could obtain loans.⁵⁷

E. Rural Electric Administration

Historically, the REA was known for financing the installations of electric and telephone systems in rural areas.⁵⁸ The REA operated on a local level through consumer cooperative, by providing loans for electric and telephone improvements as well as issuing a newsletter that helped to inform persons of the RDP functions.⁵⁹

F. Farmer Cooperative Service

While this service did not receive funding from the RDP, it was responsible for counseling all farmers through 15,000 marketing, purchasing, and service cooperatives.⁶⁰ Such cooperatives were significant in achieving RDP goals in that cooperatives assured farmers of adequate outlets for their products and provided affordable prices for supplies and services they used. Cooperatives were crucial for small farmers because they offered reasonable access to marketing, purchasing, and other services. Finally, the cooperatives also improved the bargaining power of the small farmer.⁶¹ The FCS helped farmers in the following ways:

- 1) Determined if a cooperative was needed in a particular area to effectively deal with marketing and production service and supply needs.
- 2) Offered advice in the organization and the operation of a cooperative

G. Agricultural Research Service

Most of the research conducted by the various services went through the ARS-State Experiment Stations. However, many pilot counties began their own research programs. The following outlines areas of ARS interest:

- 1) Rural resources including land, labor, and local resources.
- 2) Methods of income improvement and their results.
- 3) Adjustments strategies for full- and part-time farmers.
- 4) Special problems such as tenure, manpower utilization, and credit.⁶²

Within the ARS, the Household Economic Research Branch made information available concerning home budgeting to farm families.⁶³ (Ibid., p. 15).

H. Agricultural Marketing Service

As an active supporter of the RDP, the AMS funneled its contributions to low-income and low "level-of-living" areas. The AMS also cooperated with land-grant colleges in research efforts and offered assistance to certain pilot counties.⁶⁴ Topics of joint research included:

- 1) Population and its role in industrial development of low-income rural areas.
- 2) Education, migration, employment adjustments, and wages of rural youth in lower-income areas.
- 3) Utilization of health care facilities in such areas.
- 4) Financial security of aging farmers.
- 5) Investigation of opportunities for expanding agricultural marketing and processing industries in low-income rural areas.⁶⁵

The following services were offered by the AMS to pilot county leaders:

- 1) Surveys of population, employment, and standards of living.
- 2) Limited technical aid in determining necessity for new marketing facilities.

I. Department of Labor

The Dept. of Labor, through the Bureau of Employment Security and participating state employment security agencies, made significant contributions to the RDP. Individual states maintained employment services which usually consisted of a state headquarters, a field supervisory staff, and a system of local offices. The Department of Labor provided individual states employment service, including information concerning farm placement and special service for veterans.⁶⁶ Community branches were helpful in strengthening and diversifying their local economic base in addition to providing employment services due to their knowledge of local occupational characteristics and work force potential.⁶⁷

J. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

HEW had nine regional offices that defined departmental activities in the field and handled administrative duties. Regional directors collaborated with chairman of state rural development committees and other governmental organizations involved in the RDP.⁶⁸ HEW programs including vocational rehabilitation, social security, education health outlets, and provision of federal property were advantageous to the RDP. The vocational rehabilitation program, a cooperative state-federal program, assisted in teaching employment skills to handicapped persons and performed demonstration projects for the disabled. For those unable to properly manage their businesses, the program made available supervisory and managerial assistance.⁶⁹

While public education was extended to serve all, increased emphasis was placed on low-income families. Industrial Arts Study, office occupation training, and a vocational education, were extended in an effort to benefit rural people. Vocational education allowed students to learn industrial occupations in such areas as trade and crafts. Training for industrial pursuits incorporated techniques in design, producing, processing, assembling, maintaining, servicing, or repairing manufactured items.⁷⁰

The Community Health program located full-time local health departments in low-income rural areas. These departments offered public health outlets and information to help families maintain "healthful homes and community environments".⁷¹ Property for health and educational purposes was authorized by Congress, yet, land distribution was arranged by state agencies. Land allocation generally went to tax-supported medical institutions, hospitals, clinics, health centers, school systems, schools, colleges and universities, and other similar tax exempt institutions.⁷²

K. The Department of the Interior

While the department had no specific funds appropriated to the RDP, it gave priority to low-income rural persons in its seasonal field hiring programs. The Dept. of the Interior maintained a strong liaison with the RDP and the Dept. of Agriculture. As a result, the Dept. of the Interior offered assistance and information on fish and wildlife issues, soil and weed concerns, the development of reservoirs for recreation, acquisition of water and mineral surveys, and the creation of National Park Service recreation studies.⁷³

L. Independent Agencies

Independent agencies that contributed services to the RDP included the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Farm Credit Administration (FCA). The Small Business Administration assisted small businesses in acquiring better management skills, production, and marketing practices. Also, assistance was given to business expansion in an effort to create more jobs for the rural unemployed.⁷⁴ The administration evaluated area human and natural resources for potential new industrial development.⁷⁵ SBA also offered financial assistance for small business development in rural areas.⁷⁶ Finally, the SBA cooperated with local leaders to develop many value-added small community industries which offered off-farm employment.⁷⁷

The Farm Credit Administration banks and associations cooperated with local RDP's to provide funding, educational phases of RDP, and program planning.⁷⁸ Loans offered by FCA's Farm Credit System were not only extended to full-time farmers and cooperatives, but also to part-time farmers.⁷⁹ Members of cooperatives, who were recipients of FCA loans, selected boards of directors who then selected the officers. These officers, because of their position, could understand the farmers' needs in their respective areas and apply loans accordingly.⁸⁰ These directors were also helpful in organizing RDP in any community.⁸¹ The Farm Credit System cooperated with county, state and national committees in planning and implementing rural development activities.⁸²

State Activities

State Rural Development Committee:

The State Rural Development committees were created and organized by the Deans of Agriculture Colleges in coordination with federal and state agencies.⁸³ By centering on the development of "disadvantaged rural areas", the committees were concerned with both agricultural and non-agricultural needs of the community.⁸⁴ The major task of the state committees was to determine the nature of each individual program. These committees tailored research, program organization, and goals to fit the unique character of a community. Most states that were involved in the RDP consulted such committees.⁸⁵ Generally, state committees were composed of representatives from key agencies and organizations in the agriculture field, industrial development, education, health, and social welfare.⁸⁶ These agencies and organizations included:

- 1) the extension service
- 2) Agricultural Experiment Station
- 3) Soil Conservation Service
- 4) vocational education
- 5) Farmers Home Service (state)
- 6) Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Committee
- 7) Forest Service (state)
- 8) farm credit district
- 9) Department of Education
- 10) Department of Agriculture
- 11) employment service
- 12) Department of Public Welfare
- 13) Vocational Rehabilitation Agency
- 14) Department of Conservation
- 15) Department of Pensions and Security
- 16) Bureau of Public Administration
- 17) farm organizations (Grange, Bureau, Union)
- 18) Chamber of Commerce
- 19) Association of Soil Conservation District Supervisors
- 20) Federation of Labor.⁸⁷

Such state-level committees had a chairman, a secretary, and a guidance committee of 3 to 4 members. As the major administrative and leadership unit of the RDP, the committees were responsible for:

- 1) designation of pilot counties

- 2) information and guidance to county leaders in establishing and maintaining programs.
- 3) state-wide organization and counseling through periodic meetings.⁸⁸

The deans of the agricultural colleges at state land grant universities were responsible for meeting with local groups and officials interested in establishing a RDP pilot county. The dean was in charge of reviewing program proposals and selecting the pilot counties.⁸⁹ The following were considerations in selecting pilot counties:

- 1) Economic conditions and underemployment
- 2) Geographic, economic, and demographic conditions that were characteristic of the overall area making the individual program applicable in other areas.
- 3) Interest and enthusiasm of local persons and leaders essential to establishing and maintaining a county program.⁹⁰

County Committees

The county committee was organized by an RDP appointed agent(s) who generally specialized in such areas as agricultural extension or nutrition. The local RDP was comprised of local leadership drawn from both private organizations and government agencies.⁹¹ Thus, the RDP was the "link in the system" which attempted to get the private sector involved in local rural development. Representation thus came from a cross section of community members including farmers, businessmen, bankers, professionals, church and women's club leaders.⁹² A combination of the following agencies and organizations were also represented in several pilot counties. However, the majority of these agencies and organizations were not established in any one of the pilot counties.

- 1) Agricultural Agencies (extension service, FHA, SCS, ASC, etc.)
- 2) Industry Development Council

- 3) Chamber of Commerce
- 4) major industries (power and light, textiles, paper, etc.)
- 5) press and radio
- 6) planning and zoning commissions
- 7) county government
- 8) city government
- 9) local school authorities
- 10) health and welfare authorities
- 11) civic clubs
- 12) women's clubs
- 13) youth associations
- 14) banks
- 15) farm organizations
- 16) church groups (including Country Life committees)
- 17) National Farm Loan Association
- 18) Production Credit Association
- 19) veteran's service organizations
- 20) Social Welfare Council.⁹³

Private Sector Organizations and Non-Profit Organizations

While government and educational agencies offered skills, resources, services, and assistance, the main impetus and direction was to be left to local persons and organizations.⁹⁴ The following contributed to the RDP:

1) Foundations: Foundations were often in the position to provide funds and personnel for various RDP projects.⁹⁵

2) Farm Organizations: Leaders of these organizations informed the RDP of local farm conditions. Further, they were well-versed in farming skills. They were valuable on RDP committees and sub-committees.⁹⁶

3) Co-ops: Marketing and purchasing cooperatives, in addition to electric and telephone cooperatives, were sources of support for the RDP because of their vested interest in local development.⁹⁷

4) Civic Clubs: Through the help and insight of local leaders, these clubs were active in improving farming, homemaking, and community living.⁹⁸ Some of the groups participating in the RDP were the Kiwanis,

the Rotary Club, and the Jaycees.⁹⁹

5) Community Development Groups: Sponsored by local businessmen and farming groups, they were concerned with local development. Activities may have included community improvement contests, trade day awards, and farm demonstrations, in addition to aiding rural industrial development.¹⁰⁰

6) Credit Institutions: Because private credit institutions were the major sources for loans, it was important to include them in the RDP. These consisted of private banks, statewide industrial development corporations, and local development corporations financed by local stock issues.¹⁰¹

7) Media: Radio, television, and newspapers were often utilized in an effort to communicate the plan, goals, news, and activities of the RDP.¹⁰² The RDP also printed its own newsletter which reported on:

- A) Pilot County Program
- B) methods of area development being applied
- C) State-level planning and organization
- D) Federal departmental involvement
- E) crucial legislative developments
- F) incidents of outstanding rural area progress.¹⁰³

8). Workers Organizations: These groups were interested in economic growth and in the creation of local employment. They were often involved in local RDP programs.¹⁰⁴

9. Church groups: Churches in many communities were the only sources of local activity and organization. Community economic growth had also become a concern for them.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the church was expected to play its traditional role of providing spiritual guidance. Churches thus had the responsibility of meeting spiritual as well as the

material needs of community members. This was based on the assumption that a higher quality of life would allow one to work toward eternal life.¹⁰⁶

The Role of the Church

As the church provided support groups for rural families and their communities, they were considered an indispensable part of the RDP.¹⁰⁷ The National Council of the Churches came forward in the early stages of the RDP and played an active role in its functions.¹⁰⁸

The extent to which the church was involved in the social/economic well-being of the community was an area of discussion at the 1958 RDP Conference in Memphis. The issue was addressed by representatives of different faiths, and a consensus was formed. Their conclusion was that the church did have an interest in all levels of family and community development. This was based on the assumption that humankind was a material and spiritual being, and therefore it was the church's responsibility to see to it that these needs were met, not just the spiritual half!¹⁰⁹ The fact that Jesus "fed the multitude with loaves and fishes, just moments after he had preached the Sermon on the Mountain", was also used to support this assertion.¹¹⁰ The obligation of the church in the community was, then, to help humankind achieve and lead "a good life" on earth so that he could prepare for an eternal life afterwards. The "good life" on earth meant that one would possess a balance of both spiritual and material attributes.¹¹¹

Community development principles could be adopted from the Bible and used by the church in their RDP efforts. Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutte, Executive Director of the National Catholic Rural Life Conference,

pointed out several examples at the 1958 Memphis Conference:

Principle: All men possess intelligence and free will and are brothers by creation, redemption, and destiny.

Application: Human slavery, direct or indirect, is morally wrong. Freezing of economic-social status, lack of opportunity were also wrong.

Principle: All the material goods in this world were created by God for man, so as to enable him to develop fully his personality, establish and maintain a family, be a useful member of society, lead a good life here on earth and attain an eternal good life hereafter.

Application: Land monopoly, unjust land tenure traditions, perpetuation of proletarian status; living, housing, educational conditions not within at least a striking distance of what modern progress has made available would be against the above stated principle. (Not necessarily a flush toilet in every home, but certainly at least a sanitary toilet should be available to the family.)

Principle: The good earth is the greatest material gift of God to man. It must be used properly so as to hand it down to future generations richer than we received it.

Application: Soil and water conservation practices increasing fertility of soil are duties in conscience. Exploiting forestry resources without replenishing them is morally wrong.

Principle: There are many hidden resources still unknown to man, e.g. primary or juvenile water, that would make possible greater production.

Application: Our scientists and our universities should investigate and be open minded even if some financial interests might be temporarily hurt.

Principle: Agricultural production is the farmer's contribution to society.

Application: A farmer has a duty to produce quantity and quality as society needs it.

Principle: A producer has a right to receive a just price, and a consumer has a right to purchase the primary necessities of life at a just price.

Application: To deviate from the doctrine of a just price for either producer or consumer is not in accord with Christian morality.

Principle: A laborer is master of his hire, i.e., a living wage is his due, and the worker is bound in conscience to do an honest day's work for an honest day's wage.

Application: To force an unjust wage out of an employer, to soldier on the job, to sabotage production are morally wrong. To consider and treat human labor as a commodity is morally wrong.

While the church's involvement with the RDP was based on biblical standards and genuine concerns for its rural parishioners, it was also somewhat reactionary in nature. As the supposed threat of communism captured the Western world, it also threatened the stability of organized religion's age-old doctrines. Several churches found that their responsibilities had to reach beyond the spiritual realm in an attempt to combat attacks made on them by alleged communist advocates. Thus, the clergymen at the Memphis RDP Conference recognized the progress that the Soviets had made toward fulfilling some of the material needs of their citizens. However, the churches were quick to point out that the Soviet's particular type of progress was superficial and lacked a comprehensive solution to development problems:

There are lessons for us in some of the examples they (the Soviets) are setting for us, at least a challenge in the headway that they are making in certain limited realms of life. And it is good for us to be humbled a bit by the things that the Russians are doing. But if it is true, and I suppose it was a very good appraisal of their way of life, that they are expert in what Bishop Dana Dawson called 'efficient materialism'--that was his characterization of the present order in Russia--an 'efficient materialism'--can it be said of us that ours is the way of Christian idealism? For properly interpreted, it seems to me that that has all of the practicality that we might aspire to.¹¹²

The following recommendations, made at the Memphis conference, enumerated the ways in which many rural churches had assisted in the program;

- a) some pastors were preaching about the RDP at their pulpits by

tying it into their sermon. RDP goals and concerns were easily incorporated with biblical teachings.

b) ministers coordinated their pastoral work with some of the RDP efforts.

c) the church also offered constructive criticism to the RDP as the church was expected to help provide the program with a philosophical basis tailored to meet the needs of low-income citizens.

d) pastors often encouraged parishioners to involve themselves with the RDP which included cooperation with other churches and agencies.

e) because ministers commonly worked with 4-H clubs, Boy and Girl Scouts, FFA groups, etc., they stressed the importance of involvement of low-income youth in their activities.¹¹³

The leadership of the RDP paid particular attention to the rural churches since they recognized the influential role churches had in small towns.

10. Youth Organizations

Youth groups were seen as another opportunity to reach youth in an effort to better prepare them for new challenges in the future. Proper guidance and training for youth was believed to prevent disenchantment with democracy.¹¹⁴ As stated at the Memphis conference, "We want to uphold and strengthen our democracy, but we will have to show them (the nation's youth) a democracy that works . . . (with) a real future that offers something to work for and believe in."¹¹⁵

Yet youth groups had not penetrated many rural areas to the degree they had cities. This was due to a lack of volunteer leadership,

inability of some rural youth to pay costs involved with membership, rural youth had limited time to participate, and some rural parents did not see the value of memberships.¹¹⁶

The RDP pilot counties attempted to facilitate the efforts of youth and youth groups in its functions. Youth in Oklahoma even served on RDP committees.¹¹⁷

In Michigan, a peninsula-wide youth workers council was established to provide job guidance and counseling for rural youth. Professionals representing Scouts, YMCA, the Church, Future Farmers of America (FFA), and Future Homemakers of America (FHA) took part in these efforts in their individual programs.¹¹⁸ The 4-H Club activities in Ohio pilot counties were expanded and reoriented so that rural youth would receive vocational and career guidance.¹¹⁹

An interesting example of the business community cooperating with youth groups can be seen in the role played by the Sears Agricultural Foundation. A representative from this foundation spoke at an RDP conference in an effort to share its rural development activities and ideas with RDP members. Many of the Sears Foundation projects were applicable to the RDP.¹²⁰

Sears Roebuck and Company established the foundation because, among other reasons, their business was dependent upon the economic prosperity of rural America. The Sears Foundation worked with youth groups, such as 4-H and the Future Farmers of America, to implement many of their projects. For example, youth group members were given a heifer, gilt, or a quantity of baby chicks. An off-spring was to go to another youth. This program was very successful. Ninety percent of all swine

exhibited at Texas county and State fairs in one year were progeny of swine originally donated by the Sears Foundation.¹²¹ This same technique was used to begin a strawberry cash crop in Kentucky. With the help of the local 4-H groups and Kentucky agricultural extension agents, a \$2,000 per year investment brought in \$600,000 in revenue after 12 years.¹²²

The Foundation also sponsored community clean-up contests in cooperation with the Grange. The locality that won the contest received \$60,000 for community improvement.¹²³

As a business with interest in the rural economy, Sears was conscious to buy goods from rural industry and manufacturers. A policy of "balanced purchasing" or, buying wholesale goods from both urban and rural areas, was practical.¹²⁴

Businesses: Like Sears Roebuck and Co., local firms and branch plants of national companies had a direct interest in community economic development. The survival of local firms, well-being of employees, and local markets were crucial to the survival of businesses. Programs such as the RDP, which aided economic growth, were met with enthusiasm by business representatives.¹²⁵

Policy implementation was to be handled on a local level by an RDP agent. The RDP agent's responsibility went beyond the duties of the extension service. An RDP agent was to coordinate and mobilize interested parties in the area. Often a county development committee was formed in an effort to determine and to obtain community goals.¹²⁶

The personnel assigned to RDP pilot county projects were employees of existing agencies (extension service, state forestry department,

experiment station, Soil Conservation Service, Farmer's Home Administration). Cooperating organizations and companies also seconded personnel to the program.¹²⁷ These committees would commonly send lay persons to represent them at county development meetings.

Once formulated, the chairman and secretary of the county development committee were to have the most crucial leadership role in the program. The chairman acted as the community advocate for economic development, led community discussions, and helped resolve any disagreements concerning the program.¹²⁸ The secretary handled management and administrative responsibilities.¹²⁹

Various sub-committees were formed from the county development committee to provide expertise and services based on local needs. These subcommittees concentrated on specific areas of development such as agriculture, education, etc.

The following page provides a general step-by-step outline that was often utilized as a basis to organize a local RDP committee and prepare it for action.

8 STEPS IN A RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The following steps are suggested in establishing a comprehensive program of town-country development, utilizing local leaders and resources. However, development programs, their organization and specific projects and goals, will vary greatly from one area to another. In short the following is a general guide, not a model to be followed exactly by community leaders. Local conditions must shape local plans.

STEP ONE

- County agent calls meeting of key leaders. Those present might include farm organization leaders, farm agency representatives, a county government official, ASC committeeman, banking official, chamber of commerce representative, county schools representative. They review present economic situation, major problems, long-range trends -- potentials of a county-wide resource program -- problem of organization, gaining support, maintaining a program. They select temporary chairman.

STEP TWO

- Temporary chairman calls meeting to include major interest groups in area, nucleus of a resource development committee. Groups represented: Farm organizations, churches, business and credit interests, news media, schools, county and town governments, health and welfare groups, government agencies, womens clubs, etc.
- Original group (step one) presents county situation, using where possible outside resource people, such as personnel of State college or university, State commerce and industry agency, private companies. This involves discussion of agricultural, industrial trends....economic, social, educational problems....need for a program of resource development.

STEP THREE

- Organization of resource development committee. This involves: 1. Selection of chairman and secretary, the two key persons in a program....of 5 or 10-person steering committee....of subcommittees for agricultural development, industry, health and welfare, education, recreation, etc. (These may be already organized groups such as industrial board, health council, etc.) 2. Setting up agency advisory committee, including representatives of farm and non-farm government agencies.

STEP FOUR

- Carefully prepared publicity explaining the need for a program, and its objectives to citizens of the area.

STEP FIVE

- Planning and carrying out resource surveys, economic base studies. Such surveys might cover agriculture in the county, industry potential, public facilities, educational and training needs, manpower, rural family living, etc.
- Subcommittees have general responsibility for resource studies in their area of interest -- agriculture, industry, etc. Agency representatives provide technical counsel in planning, completing surveys. In some cases, outside resource people lend assistance.
- Evaluation of information assembled. This may be done by program chairman, chairman of subcommittees and agency advisors, with outside assistance, if necessary.

STEP SIX

- Presentation of survey findings and conclusions to full resource development committee.
- Publicity explaining survey findings and conclusions to people of the county.

STEP SEVEN

- Specific program goals agreed to by resource development committee:
First, short-range goals (such as improved farm markets, increased production of certain crops, community organization, expansion of specific small industry, etc.)
Second, long-range goals to be reached in 2, 5, 10 years or longer (A watershed project, industrial park development, school consolidation, tourist industry expansion are a few examples).

STEP EIGHT

- Action by subcommittees to reach program objectives:
 - Fact-finding,
 - Promotion,
 - Technical and financial assistance, where possible,
 - Cooperation with persons responsible for regular government and private programs,
 - Evaluation and discussion.

Source: RDP Handbook, 1959 p. 6.

Implementation

Individual counties sought to select development approaches that best utilized local natural resources and met community needs. Many counties applied more than one development strategy in an effort to enrich and diversify their local economy. Usually a combination of both basic and indirect development (e.g., human capital) approaches were attempted. Building basic industry was a direct approach to economic growth that included industrial promotion, agricultural extension, and tourism promotion.¹³⁰

A. Developing Basic Industry:

Establishing, attracting, or expanding existing industry was a means of providing a supplemental if not substantial source of income to many small farmers and other rural citizens. In addition, it had the potential of attracting outside dollars into the community. The local RDP often established local industrial committees to assist with these efforts. These committees usually consisted of representatives from the local Chamber of Commerce, Bankers Association, power companies and other utilities, etc., who worked with the State Development Corporation, Small Business Administration, Commerce Department and others.¹³¹ On an individual basis, or as a committee, those involved with such committees were responsible for attracting new businesses, industries, and aiding in local industrial start-ups & expansion.¹³²

1. Attracting New Industry

The RDP established certain guidelines for communities to follow in their task of attracting new industry to the community. The following criteria attempted to ensure stable growth and clean industry, while

preventing economic leakage.

- a) the business should be a permanent asset to the community;
- b) the business or industry should help the community to gain or maintain a balance in the labor force. For example, a balance should be obtained between skilled and unskilled workers, men and women, local and imported labor;
- c) the wage standards should uphold or raise the economic level of the community;
- d) the effect that the new industry will have on community infrastructure should not exceed local capacity;
- e) businesses that release pollutants should be considered with caution.¹³³
- f) when considering a plant prospect, communities should be more concerned with the size and continuity of the payroll as opposed to the size of the plant.
- g) communities should seek those plants which are well suited to local needs and resources. This often meant small businesses rather than branch plants with large national headquarters.
- h) communities must be skeptical of those industries that can only operate through subsidization in the form of tax grants, free rent, etc. as they may not be financially sound. Extraordinary concessions should not be extended to industries that are to be of a permanent nature.
- i) developing processing, packaging, or fabricating plants that utilize and help market local raw materials is also a strong possibility for many communities.
- j) vocational training, made available in community high schools,

is also recommended to prepare a labor supply capable of performing industrial oriented jobs.¹³⁴

In an effort to meet these criteria, communities were urged to undertake an aggressive campaign. This usually involved acquiring financial support, resource and marketing studies, and human resource training.

Locating Financial Aid

To attain financial aid for local industrial development campaigns, communities were referred to different public and private institutions. Local banks and public utilities that served the area, state and regional chambers of commerce, state development credit corporations, state agencies, large business concerns in the community, and federal agencies were among these institutions.¹³⁵ Funds were often raised in several communities by industrial development foundations which sold stock to interested local citizens. Revenue would be used to facilitate new industry that might locate in their community or to construct buildings to be leased for speculative use.¹³⁶

In Alabama, industrial promotion teams were created consisting of local businessmen. The teams were responsible for promoting area resources to prospective manufacturers.¹³⁷ In Taney County, Missouri, an industrial improvement association was formed and membership rights were sold to businessmen and other leaders. Funds raised were used to publicize the county's assets as a means of attracting outside industry (Small Business, A Keystone of Rural Area Development). A development group coordinated under the RDP in Tippah County, Mississippi, remodeled a building for industrial use. As a result, a clothing factory, which employed 250 laborers, was located there.¹³⁸

Research and Marketing

Once aid was found, communities were advised to hire or request assistance from professional consultants to perform resource studies, marketing research and provide development strategies.¹³⁹ For example, Oklahoma State University performed a study that inventoried existing resources and determined potentials for industry. In Choctaw County, Oklahoma, this service was to attract new industry.¹⁴⁰ Federal Extension workers were among the many individual groups and agencies that helped compile data and performed research to be used later by communities in their development efforts. The general duties of the Federal Extension workers were to:

- 1) make surveys and interpret results;
- 2) secure research and data;
- 3) point out local problems and objectives;
- 4) develop or expand markets;
- 5) organize procedures, select priority projects, and create timetables for completion of projects;
- 6) evaluate progress of program with help from the land-grant programs;
- 7) prepare reports, publicity, tours, etc.

Upon completion of such research, communities would often print flyers, leaflets, and even produce films that advertised local assets to perspective businesses and industries.¹⁴¹ Brochure information would include such information as available sites, and resources, in addition to descriptions of strong local businesses.¹⁴² Perry County, Indiana, adopted an aggressive program to attract new industry. Several new industries, which employed approximately 400 persons, were located in the area. While the RDP was involved with the efforts, it is difficult to gage the impact of its contribution.¹⁴³ Flyers also included information about community amenities that could be used to persuade

industries to locate in their area. For example, a community that assured industries that their need for skilled labor will be met through vocational training makes a community attractive to industry in recruitment efforts. It also demonstrated that the county is receptive to the needs of business and industry. The Joplin, Missouri vocational training program, for example, tested and trained potential employees according to the needs of an incoming industry.¹⁴⁴

2. Maintaining Existing Industries

The RDP also assisted existing industries & businesses and promoted the development of new ones by first unifying the efforts of local businessmen, community leaders, and government agencies.¹⁴⁵ The Department of Commerce and Office of Area Assistance made available advice concerning location and development requirements for industry, in addition to information about area economic data, development strategies, and available federal aid.¹⁴⁶

General objectives included:

- A. overcoming small business' production, management, and credit problems;¹⁴⁷
- B. stimulating sales;¹⁴⁸
- C. modernizing & expanding small businesses and industry;¹⁴⁹
- D. seeking out new products that could be produced or marketed by existing businesses or a start-up company. Particular emphasis was placed on resource development in agriculture, forestry, mining, and other resources of the area.¹⁵⁰

An outstanding example in which the actions of the RDP prompted an expansion of an existing manufacturer can be found in Price County, Wisconsin. The RDP county resource development committee first organized a campaign promoting efficient use of local resources. Next,

the committee, along with the USDA, and the Small Business Administration, worked with a local manufacturing company to expand its operation so that hardwood could be produced in addition to shredded fiber.¹⁵¹ The plant expansion provided an additional 100 jobs to the community and was financed by the private sector and a local bank.¹⁵²

B. Agriculture and Natural Resources

1. Agriculture

The RDP attempted to play the part of "change agent" or the role of assisting communities and their members in economic and social transition in many low-income farming communities. Due to the on-set of the agricultural technical revolution that had become prominent in the 1950's, progressive extension strategies were required if small farmers were to remain on the farm. This entailed education in agriculture technology management, and applied economics.¹⁵³

In many cases, credit and more land was essential for smaller farmers to make a transition to commercial farming. Yet in some cases, farmers could become more productive by growing crops that required less acreage and still resulted in high yields.¹⁵⁴

The RDP further stressed that in order to be competitive in agriculture, a regional strategy had to be pursued. Area crop specialization, in addition to vertical integration of the various segments of production, including supply and marketing, was recommended by the RDP. This approach was designed to give area farmers a better chance in penetrating the new marketing web which had expanded to the national level. However, in reality, this option was generally only open to large-scale farmers.¹⁵⁵

In rural areas where soil or terrain was not conducive to efficient farming, rural people were encouraged to take advantage of other natural resources located on their farms. In some counties production of timber and related products was encouraged. Other counties found that their local farm lands were a rich source of minerals.

2. Forestry

There were many opportunities in forestry as most low-income farmers owned timber land or lived near areas containing timber. Much of this timber, however, had been long neglected in terms of investment and management.¹⁵⁶

The Forestry Committee was expected to plan a program for their respective regions. Pulp and timber companies, private foresters, state and federal foresters, and the Soil Conservation Service, all helped to implement program activities.¹⁵⁷ Area programs typically centered on determining profitable uses for forest products, management of forest growth and production, marketing, and creating or attracting industry which utilized timber.¹⁵⁸ Efforts of the RDP program involved fire control, insect and disease protection, waste prevention, establishing timber farms, woodland renovation, and planting of seedlings.¹⁵⁹

Old-growth and secondary growth timber often provided substantial supplies of profitable products, including lumber and veneer, bolts, ties, mine timbers, and pulpwood. These products not only were profitable for farmers but could bring in additional income to the community through value-added industry.¹⁶⁰ At the 1958 RDP conference, it was suggested that those areas that produced logs could carry the process beyond this stage. Timber for small wood-working plants, such

as a chair factory, was encouraged.¹⁶¹

In Michigan, the RDP carried on a continuous campaign to improve forestry marketing and management. Six demonstration woodlots were established with the cooperation of the state and federal agencies, commercial and other private interests.¹⁶² Pine thinning and fertilization trials were also conducted.¹⁶³ Finally, Christmas tree sales increased upon the introduction of the RDP to the area in the mid-1950's.¹⁶⁴

3. Mineral Resources

Many of the pilot counties had mineral resources that could be marketed or more efficiently utilized. RDP advocates suggested that these areas be surveyed. In some states, mining agencies made their services available for such projects.¹⁶⁵ For example, the Bureau of Mines made technical services available to counties and development groups in an effort to aid in the stimulation of mining enterprises. This included identifying mineral samples submitted by RDP agencies and the examination of mineral deposits. Assistance was accessible to the private sector as well as the public.¹⁶⁶

Extension and Development of Resources on the Farm

a. Extension

As part of a general plan for development, communities with the help of RDP assessed their local resources for development purposes.¹⁶⁷ Studies to be utilized by RDP counties were often joint efforts of the Agricultural Research Service (USDA) and land grant colleges. Major topics of study included:

- 1). Land, work force, and other rural area resources
- 2). Methods of enhancing income on small farms

- 3). Adjustments that would allow farm labor & resources to be used more effectively.¹⁶⁸

Extension services, supported by the RDP, required agents to take different steps of action before progress could be made. First, a local leader was sought in whom small farmers could confide. Next, some of the families in need were visited by RDP agents in order for the agents to become more acquainted with them. Before farm resources were appraised, it was hoped that recipient families had gained confidence in the leader. Upon taking resource inventory (including human), training and educational sessions took place. Training sessions could be on an individual basis or in small groups of more than one family. Local organizations were also used as an extension outlet whenever possible. Eventually persons within the group were trained to take leadership roles. Youths were also given leadership opportunities for educational purposes.¹⁶⁹

The committees from the major farm enterprises, like dairying, cotton, and livestock, were asked to focus on the common goals of the RDP. Ultimately, farm organizations, marketing associations, and feed and fertilizer companies, with the help of extension services would maintain the program.¹⁷⁰ The Federal Extension Service, Agriculture Research Service, the Agricultural Marketing Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration, and the Farm Credit Administration, also provided governmental services which could be utilized.¹⁷¹ Such extension goals were molded to meet individual and community needs. Soil conservation, farm and home management, farm and family budgeting, and increasing production and marketing, were common

areas of interest.

b. Resource Evaluation

The Extension Service was involved in the analysis and development of farm resources. Small farmers were encouraged to grow commercial crops that did not require large amounts of land, yet were compatible with human, mechanical, and technical resources on the farm, and market expectations.¹⁷² For example, Perry Counties' (Indiana) "agricultural task force", which was the RDP branch responsible for farm improvement, discovered the area's potential to produce grade-A commercial eggs. Appropriate training and marketing steps were taken to bring about an increase of community income through commercial egg marketing.¹⁷³

Counseling and farm planning was a major part of the program in the Pulaski-Alexander (IL) two-county area. In this area, a RDP extension agent, along with assistance from agri-businesses and other interested individuals, led the program. One small farmer produced greenbeans as a commercial crop for the first time and this added considerably to his income.¹⁷⁴

The Michigan program also utilized extension agencies and "co-ops" to assist in marketing and development of cash crops. New vegetable varieties, cranberries, blueberries, and strawberries, were grown for extra farm income. In addition, cooperatives were organized for egg and livestock marketing purposes. Finally, Christmas tree sales also increased.¹⁷⁵

c. Credit

Agricultural credit was necessary for farmers to modernize or obtain more land. Different loan plans were made available to small

farmers to better meet their needs. Long-term loans were used to purchase additional acreage or for major farm repair. Intermediate loans were used to buy livestock, machinery, or equipment. In both cases, real estate mortgages were commonly used to secure them. Finally, short-term loans were utilized to purchase seed, fertilizer, or to pay feed and fuel bills. Farmer's harvests could be used to secure these loans.¹⁷⁶ A complete list of those groups (private and public), can be found in Chapter 2.

d. Marketing

Improved farm and forestry product marketing, was one way in which a community could experience tangible growth. This often included specifying needed adjustments in rural marketing systems and determining to what extent area industries could provide alternative employment opportunities for rural citizens.¹⁷⁷ Marketing also involved seeking new community outlets or expanding old ones, and enhancing marketing management and product handling.¹⁷⁸ In Anson county, N.C., farm women were able to market clothing that they made at home. With the suggestion of community development leaders, a local clothing store agreed to provide an outlet for the local women's products.¹⁷⁹

Better marketing strategies not only brought in more dollars to the community but it stimulated local employment. This was the case in Holmes County, Mississippi where county RDP leaders were responsible for the organization and development of a 100,000 bushel grain elevator and feed mill. This project created jobs while enhancing local farmers market accessibility ("Small Business, A Keystone of Rural Area Development").

Market and product management were also often essential steps to boost sales. A RDP agent along with local lay leaders in a West Virginia pilot county developed strategies to market fruits & vegetables produced on small farms. Their process was as follows.

First, the local auction market was reorganized by the group. Then, classes were conducted that trained farmers in better methods of grading & sizing their produce on the farm. By using the new grading techniques, the produce that farmers brought to market was a better grade, thus it fetched a higher price than before.¹⁸⁰

RDP agents and leaders were able to utilize the services of the Agricultural Marketing Service (USDA), state colleges of agriculture, including their extension services and experiment stations. These institutions and agencies provided local leaders with information and technical assistance used in solving marketing problems.¹⁸¹

Many farmers also received direction from the Farmer Cooperative Service which worked through area co-ops. Services included the assessment of individual co-ops which determined whether cooperatives could be equipped to handle marketing problems. These agents also helped with co-op organization, and assisted in a co-op's effort to assure that small farmers would receive equity in the marketplace.¹⁸²

A peach grower's co-op was organized in Meriwether County, GA. with the aid of lay workers and RDP leaders. This co-op was used for marketing and packaging purposes. As a result of the co-op, the volume of peach shipments increased tremendously. In addition, the co-op employed 170 part-time workers.¹⁸³

Other Factors that Contributed to Community Development and the RDP

1) Tourism

Tourism, recreation, and related commercial activities were recognized as another source of income in rural areas. Tourism was a potential basic industry in such areas because:

- a. the national population was increasing in the late 1940's and 1950's;
- b. there seemed to be more time for people to enjoy recreation;
- c. there was a general increase in national income; and
- d. continued expansion and improvement of transportation systems which allowed people to travel more freely.¹⁸⁴

For those pilot counties located near national parks, the National Park Service was available to give them advice on planning their park and recreation programs. The National Park Service was also able to help counties to lease land for recreational purposes from the Bureau of Land Management, US Forest Service, Bureau of Reclamation (USDA), and the Army Corps of Engineers, or purchase land from the Bureau of Land Management and the General Service Administration.¹⁸⁵

Once potential areas for recreation had been selected, counties could follow a format recommended for implementation in the RDP Memphis Proceedings, which included:

- 1) selection and review of advertising media in an effort to inform tourist of local attractions;
- 2) wide community efforts confirmed with broad leadership
- 3) careful planning organization including market analysis and inventory, necessary goods and services, ample resources and area accessibility.¹⁸⁶

Suggestions of possible tourist and recreation attractions made at the Memphis Proceeding were as follows:

- 1) facilities for recreation and special events. These facilities are excellent for community activities to be utilized by

local people as well as visitors. Such amenities would also be attractive to incoming industry and business.

2) Development and sale of local crafts. The sale of items like cane bottomed chairs, hooked rugs, local cuisine, or patchwork quilts had the potential of capturing outside tourist dollars. Private organizations could offer special instruction and training for farm families who wished to engage in such "cottage industry"!

3) Finding new uses for exhausted industries. Old mining communities could be the site for tours and exploration of farmer's mining shafts.

4) Making the community attractive to retirees. Older Americans represent a substantial source of income for the community in which they establish their home as many had pensions or social security incomes. Communities, therefore, were encouraged to make their community more pleasant and attractive for retirees as well as tourists.

5) Taking advantage of homes or other sites of unique interest. Homes with historical significance could be used as tourist attractions. For example, in the South, many homes were constructed before the Civil War that, if in satisfactory condition, could be used as attractions for tourists.

6) Farm resources. Well stocked ponds, lakes, and woods are alluring to sportsman who could pay farmers for hunting and fishing rights for their facilities. Vacation farms are also popular, as in a case in southwestern Michigan. Here, a vacation farm eventually grew into an outstanding area resort.¹⁸⁷

Community and Human Capital Development

1) Community Planning

A major factor in bringing about orderly area growth was community planning. Local planning was essential in creating proper relationships among commercial and local buildings, transportation, housing, and public facilities.¹⁸⁸ By composing and adopting a comprehensive plan, a community was able to assess present public and private resources in an effort to ensure organized growth in the future.¹⁸⁹ Zoning regulations could be adopted to avoid environmental or health hazards when developing industry. More commonly, zoning was also used to prevent farm land from being unscrupulously acquired for subdivisions, airports, factories, etc.

A lack of proper zoning had the potential of becoming a threat because it left rural areas vulnerable to urban sprawl. Farmers were vulnerable if their land was unprotected by rural zoning and could be victims of high suburban taxes which could inevitably drive them out of business. Planning and its various aspects were thus stressed as they promoted and protected rural development.¹⁹⁰ Planning and development agencies also prompted economic development. They did this by assisting local development groups, promoting improvement of industry and agriculture, counseling businessmen who sought new plant or firm locations, and spurring tourism. Several planning agencies contributed their expertise to pilot county projects.¹⁹¹

2) Vocational Training

A major concern for advocates of the RDP was the need for vocational education. With one-half of the young from low income farm

families seeking off-farm employment, it was critical that they receive training which was relevant and marketable. Most of these individuals worked in offices, factories, or assumed leadership roles elsewhere.¹⁹²

The RDP recommended that states institute pilot vocational operations in public schools.¹⁹³ In addition, the RDP encouraged pilot counties to utilize state and local vocational training facilities, local businesses, schools, etc. in an attempt to upgrade the skills of local labor and expose youth to better vocational training.¹⁹⁴

There were several cases in which RDP counties were successful in activating vocational programs. In Kentucky, trade school classes were conducted to help farm people develop certain skills in RDP pilot counties. The Bureau of Vocational Education was responsible for the implementation of the program. Vocational agricultural and home economic teachers volunteered their time to conduct classes. As a result, over 200 special classes that taught students home & farm skills took place in these counties.¹⁹⁵ Mobile units were also used in Kentucky so that teachers and equipment could be taken to isolated parts of the state for instruction.¹⁹⁶ Classes in welding, electrical wiring, plumbing, office practices, and vocational agriculture, were held on a regular basis.¹⁹⁷ In Tennessee, a RDP pilot county utilized locally furnished equipment and materials to teach youth carpentry skills. The Tennessee Vocational Education Department also added a trades & industries teacher to the county's staff.¹⁹⁸

3. Health and Nutrition

Health and nutrition was another priority of the RDP. Thus steps were taken to educate farm families on matters concerning basic

nutrition, sanitation, and medical needs.¹⁹⁹ The emphasis was on preventive intervention. Families were informed, for example, of the need to seek medical assistance during the early phases of an illness. Such practice would save them money and prevented later health difficulties. They were also taught the importance of meal planning and sound sanitation practices as a means of fighting disease.²⁰⁰

Next, lay and professional groups would join together in county meetings to determine what area services were necessary and how to obtain them. Procuring health services usually meant extending beyond the boundaries of the community. Inter-community cooperative efforts made it easier for small towns to gain access to the use of modern medical knowledge and technology.²⁰¹

In Oklahoma, new health facilities were constructed and nutrition education was made available in participating counties. Home improvement contests were organized and conducted by the South Carolina RDP.²⁰² In addition to improving 1,379 farm family incomes, the RDP assisted these families in securing medical examinations and treatments, and obtaining a more substantial food supply.²⁰³ The sanitary conditions of their homes and surroundings were also upgraded.

CHAPTER THREE

CASE STUDIES

Approximately nine pilot counties out of more than 70 are further assessed in this thesis. These counties represent different geographical areas and their local RDP projects varied according to county needs. Agents who were actively involved with the programs in these counties were interviewed.

While interviewees were asked a few standardized, open-ended questions, they were also encouraged to speak freely about the activities of the programs in which they participated. Information gained from interviews provided a clearer understanding of local policy implementation and valuable insights useful for evaluation purposes.

Due to the individual nature of each RDP county program and the fact that the program existed several years ago, it was not feasible to administer a formal survey. Questions that were asked required involved well-defined answers not suitable for close-ended questionnaires. Such questionnaires would have also failed to account for the lack of uniformity among pilot county programs.

As the programs took place nearly three decades ago, many of those who participated in the RDP are no longer living. Contacting those who were interviewed was a difficult task. There was no systematic method of obtaining the names of interviewees. Several phone calls were made to different county extension service offices until an official could provide information about a potential interviewee.

The interview was structured around, but not confined to, the following questions:

- 1) What type of projects was the county involved with and what were the results?
- 2) What was the step by step process of implementation?
- 3) Who were the actors?
- 4) Did the program focus on the small farmer as was intended by the RDP? If not, who, if any, were the beneficiaries?
- 5) Do you feel that the main role or purpose of the RDP was that of a "change facilitator" needed to combat the affects of agricultural mechanization?
- 6) Was the program and its projects "successful?" How so and to what degree?

BAMBURG COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

(September 2, 1988 interview with a former RDP county)

The Bamburg County program was fairly comprehensive in nature in that it centered on soil conservation, field irrigation, marketing, home improvement and health issues. Three agents were hired for the Caucasian program by the RDP. Areas of agent specialization included soil conservation, agronomy, and health related areas. The agent who handled the RDP program for the Blacks is no longer living. Thus, information concerning the number of agents employed with this segment is not readily available.

Many of the area small farmers grew cotton, yet there was a constant problem with flooding. Drainage programs were thus initiated by the RDP to improve growing conditions. These programs proved to be especially beneficial to many small farmers as it provided them a means to "catch-up" with the larger farmers had adopted these techniques a decade earlier. Soil conservation and land capacity studies, conducted by the RDP agents, were useful to farmers as they helped to determine crop placement and aided in better farm management.

A local market authority was devised for the purpose to market pole beans, a local cash crop similar to green beans. The local market attracted buyers to the community thus freeing farmers from having to truck their produce to other places to be sold. Not only did farmers receive better prices for their produce at the local market, but it allowed them to stay at home where their assistance was needed for harvesting purposes. This program was very successful for the next seven years at which time there became a shortage of labor for crop picking.

Home improvement projects were also conducted under the RDP to encourage better insulation and sanitation in homes. There were many categories in these contests, winners of each section were awarded prizes that had been donated by local merchants. This was also a popular project that was implemented by the RDP.

One RDP agent, who served the county for approximately one year, observed that many of the local children had serious dental problems. With the aid of the state health department and two area dentists, she conducted a fluoridation treatment program for these children.

RDP agents assisted local farmers in securing Social Security payments by explaining to them the requirements and helping them to fill out forms properly. RDP agents also stopped a local employee of the Farmers Home Administration from limiting the amount of capital they could receive on loan for badly needed fertilizer. Those federal agencies active in the Bamberg County RDP included the Agricultural Stabilization Agency, Farmers Home Administration, and the Farm Credit Administration. The state legislature and the state marketing division

were also supportive. Merchants, on an individual basis, aided the RDP. However, most of the business organizations such as the Jaycees, were at best "luke warm" in their reactions to the RDP. One town organization actually accused the RDP of being socialist in nature. The churches were helpful as one minister chaired the local RDP. The black RDP program benefited from the black community church because it provided a place for development meetings that were often integrated with church activities on Sunday afternoons.

Overall, the interviewee had a positive yet realistic attitude concerning the results of the program. He felt that the goal of reaching the small farmer was obtained. However, without intensive one-on-one contact with those in need, it was difficult to show continuous progress. He was pleased that the program kept many elderly small farmers afloat for a few more years. While he believed that most of the agricultural extension efforts were effective, he acknowledged that other challenges that came a few years later impeded the progress made by the RDP. Commercial farming techniques, the initial problem that triggered the instigation of the RDP, would continue to haunt the small farmer.

SUMMERS COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA

(Interview with former RDP agent Bob Baber, Aug. 21, 1988)

The Summers County program focused on agricultural projects geared to the needs of small farmers. Projects included a green tomato project, a dairy cattle start-up program, feeder pig project, and a strawberry development and marketing project. These were among the major projects that were implemented, though other ideas that were

tested as well.

There were many participants in both the dairy calf program and the strawberry development project as opposed to the other projects which did not create as much community enthusiasm. The dairy calf project did not have the impact on the income of the smaller farmers that was anticipated. The strawberry development program, which was a state RDP project, had some positive results. The local RDP agent worked with small farmers on an one-on-one basis as opposed to conducting formal meetings. Such meetings did not prove to be an effective way of reaching local people in need. The RDP agent ordered strawberry plants for interested parties and made available a packing shed where harvested strawberries could be stored. A local farmer donated his truck so that the strawberries could then be taken to the state market to be sold. Those who participated in the project the first year were successful as weather conditions were favorable. The strawberry crop acted as an income booster for these small farmers. The extra income made from the strawberry crop, though supplemental in most cases, greatly enhanced the small farmer's household income.

The second year of the strawberry project, there were many new participants. However, an early frost destroyed the vast majority of the crop which left many in dismay. Most did not have the risk capital to continue with the project the following season and their economic situations did not allow them to take chances with an innovative project. Despite the fact that capital was made available to them through the Farmers Home Administration, many were not willing to mortgage their homes without some guarantee of success. Those who had

risk capital, or who were fortunate enough to have stable part-time employment, could afford irrigation and other investments necessary to grow strawberries. A few continue to grow strawberries through the 1980's.

While the activities of the Summers County program concentrated on the smaller, low-income farmer, the lack of program funding, local off-the-farm jobs, and time that extension agents could spend with their clients, worked against program effectiveness. Extensive training of and consultation of these small farmers, on an individual basis, was necessary in an effort to teach them new techniques in farming and help them improve home and farm management skills. Unfortunately, the RDP structure did not provide enough resources, capital or human, to allow the Summers County RDP agents to meet the many needs of its rural citizens. Unlike many of the RDP counties, there were few community organizations and individuals available or willing to offer their services to the RDP. Thus, all responsibilities of the RDP were left to the extension agents. The program could therefore not operate as a community program as it was intended, making it less effective in its efforts.

METCALFE COUNTY, KENTUCKY

(Interview with former RDP agent Lucy Forbes (Vocational extension), 9-9-88.

The RDP in South Central Kentucky was organized in a district made up of eight-to-ten counties. Each county had a series of local RDP clubs which, in many ways, were similar to a community support group. An old school house was renovated by members to be used for the purpose

of RDP meetings, classes, and recreational events held which were quite frequently.

In many ways, the county RDP, made up of local club representatives, behaved as a community action group. For example, due to the solicited support of the RDP, an education bond was put on the local ballot and passed. This bond brought about the consolidation of former one-room school houses in the area. The RDP sponsored efforts to install a water system in an area city. Before this time, water was brought into the city from nearby wells or creeks. The RDP was also responsible for establishing the annual county fair which still continues to operate. Finally, as a result of RDP action, electrification was extended to many areas that did not yet have access to power.

Individual clubs offered extension courses in sewing, food preservation, and gardening classes to citizens. The vocational extension agent in charge also stressed the significance of motivation and encouraged members not to limit expectations of themselves or the community. Members were also informed of the importance of keeping their children in school.

Farm extension meetings focused on such areas as farm and home management, budgeting and soil conservation. A soil technician, one of the RDP agents, was available to teach participants better farming techniques. Both home and agricultural extension efforts were widely received by local small farmers.

The RDP area development branch served as a force to attract new businesses to the area. Led by an RDP economic development agent, this

program was a precursor to the local Chamber of Commerce who would later be successful in bringing more industry into the area.

Clubs were to assume the responsibility for their projects. Members had to work together to plan activities and, in many cases, they located funding as well. For example, one club solicited funds from the private sector to pay for community Christmas lighting.

The RDP county commission and local clubs attracted support from a wide variety of individuals and organizations. Participants included the better educated farmers, businessmen, lawyers, judges, airport officials, business groups such as the Lions Club, the 4-H, and the churches. While the local RDP club members did not necessarily include economically deprived rural citizens, according to the interviewee, its projects and programs did benefit the lower-income rural sector. The majority of farms in the area, however, were small and self-contained. A local sewing factory made it possible for many to obtain some additional income. Thus, due to the uniform size of area farms, most farmers could benefit from the extension programs sponsored by the RDP. Finally, by providing the opportunity for citizen involvement in broad policy development, communities became stronger and more self-sufficient.

TANEY COUNTY, MISSOURI
(Interview with RDP agent Jon Thacker, 9-8-88)

The Taney County RDP Committee consisted of several sub-committees which were represented at steering committee meetings. Sub committees were created in the following areas: crafts, health, agriculture, tourism, and education.

The craft committee helped local craftsmen promote their products. A craft fair was sponsored once a year so that members could display and sell their goods. The fair was very successful in terms of product exposure and in providing craftsmen an opportunity to earn supplemental income. Craft items were also sold in local tourist shops, to craft retailers, or sold at roadside markets. The sub-committee helped local craftsmen create a marketing network. Through the county RDP the Taney County Tuberculosis Committee was established. This was one of the responsibilities of the health sub-committee.

The agriculture sub-committee was represented by local farmers. Balanced farming and home economic extension programs were geared toward the small farmer. Most farmers in the area were generally part-timers who sought additional work in other sectors, such as that of tourism.

The tourist sub-committee's major role was to help attract more tourists to the area. Local businessmen and hotel operators were involved with the efforts of this sub-committee. The committee printed a tourist brochure for the area. Local tourist attractions were solicited to advertise in the brochure. Advertising fees were used to compensate for the cost of the leaflet. The committee also arranged to tag a truck-load of trout in one of the local lakes. This was another attempt to attract tourists as prizes were awarded to those who caught a tagged fish.

Adult education courses were coordinated by the education sub-committee. Subjects or course topics were based on community request. The Missouri State Department of Education paid for the courses and found an instructor for them often from a college in the area. A motel

management course, for example, was offered to interested parties. Hotel managers from the neighboring city of Springfield travelled to the county to instruct these courses.

Attempts were made by the RDP committee to encourage Forsythe and Branson (the two major towns in the county) to work together on area economic development strategies. These efforts, unlike most of those of the Taney County RDP, proved to be futile.

In retrospect, the many services provided by the RDP played a large role in allowing some smaller or part-time farmers to remain on the farm. In addition, area tourism provided many of these farms with a supplementary income. The RDP, as a whole, also made a modest contribution to the community structure that would later support a major tourist attraction.

WASHINGTON COUNTY, MAINE

(Interview with former RDP agent Richard Varney--Cooperative Community development extension--9-8-88)

The Washington County RDP Commission created sub-committees to concentrate on the development of the local basic economy. Areas of emphasis included marine resources, agriculture, forestry and recreation.

The RDP sponsored a variety of projects in these designated areas. Poultry development and sheep growing programs were implemented so that rural persons could take advantage of this market. This project was profitable for a few years until marketing conditions changed.

The U.S. Forest Service conducted a study for the RDP, that depicted the area's capacity to develop tourism and recreation. This

was beneficial to the recreation sub-committee which used the findings as a guide to recreation development. In addition to promotion of tourism, the sub-committee attempted to make recreation areas in the county more accessible. For example, county signs were made and access to a local lake was developed.

The interviewee did feel that the program reached the low-income rural people in its effort to help them remain in the county. Yet the participants in the RDP came from a large cross section of citizens which included farmers, fishermen, teachers, clergymen, and school superintendents. This is a strong indication that the RDP policy implementation goals, which stressed comprehensive community effort and involvement were met.

According to the interviewee, some of the projects would not have taken place if the RDP had not been created (for example, the lake access project). This is contrary to the theory that most of the activities taken on by the RDP, would have eventually been handled by Federal agencies which were already established in the pilot county. In fact, the interviewee noted that there was very little program guidance from upper level government. Thus, county leaders were forced to "play by ear" when determining program goals and activities. The local RDP cooperative extension office composed and published a county development plan to be utilized by the community.

The Washington County, Maine program seemed to accomplish, at least temporarily, some of its initial goals. However, as in the case of most development programs, extensive progress and change is not an immediate outcome.

BUTLER CO., KENTUCKY

(Interview with former Butler County RDP agent Ben Brown,
9-9-88)

As in the case of Metcalfe County, the Butler County RDP program acted as a community support group as well as a community action group. The two county programs were also organized in a similar fashion.

Initially, RDP agents became familiar with the community and discovered its natural leaders. Next, meetings were conducted for those interested and local RDP clubs were formed. Club members were commonly part-time farmers, teachers, ministers, and merchants. Owners of small businesses were principal leaders of the local RDP. Clubs sent representatives to the county RDP meeting while agencies and clubs sent lay people to the RDP agency committee. Groups involved included city and county government, and churches. Civic groups such the 4-H and/or Future Homemakers of America were significant members.

Once community groups or clubs were organized, a club house or community center was established. Often, an old school house was renovated or a new building was constructed. Not only was the edifice used for RDP meetings and functions but it was also used for club and community meetings, extension workshops, and reception (i.e., weddings, etc.). Community action centered on area clean-ups, amenity and recreation improvement, agricultural and marketing enhancement, and water purification.

Clean-up projects began with cleaning up the yards of homeowners in the community. Painting and sign construction, used for previously unmarked county roads, were also common activities. Finally, members cleaned-up old cemeteries that had long been ignored.

A county park and fair grounds were also established by the county RDP. This area provided playground equipment and recreation areas, a baseball field in which Little League baseball was to be played, and a riding arena for horse shows. While the county fair still continues today, the fairgrounds have been moved. The original site was sold and developed.

Agriculture extension concentrated on field drainage. Ditches were dredged to prevent flooding on fields. A soil conservation agent was available through the RDP for such drainage projects and general soil improvement efforts. The RDP also sponsored a farmer's market where community members could buy produce from local farmers.

The RDP also conducted a county water improvement project. First, the county extension office performed a study to evaluate the quality of groundwater. This study was used to determine if a water treatment plant was necessary as opposed to purchasing water from a neighboring city. Upon completion of the study, signatures were collected as a means of showing support for the proposed water treatment plant. Next, the Farmers Home Administration was solicited by the RDP for assistance. The FHA financed the treatment plant and the project was completed.

Though the RDP focused on lower income rural persons, it benefitted the community as a whole. This was true because the majority of citizens earned low incomes. The program operated on a joint basis in that it aided both the town and country areas. The major success stories of the Butler County RDP, according to the interviewee, were those incidents in which citizens themselves accomplished goals.

Another accomplishment of the Butler County RDP, was its longevity.

The county RDP program is still active in the 1980's. According to Mike Jackson, presently an agricultural extension agent in Butler county, the RDP continues to be a community support and action group. The club house is used for extension and educational workshops (often sponsored by such groups as 4-H, etc.) community, and civic club meetings. RDP clubs meet to discuss projects. Club representatives are still sent to county RDP steering committees which meet on a quarterly basis. President, vice president, and secretary meet once a month.

Recent RDP projects included water line extension, road improvements, and general area beautification projects. RDP members cooperated with the local extension office on a bridge construction project. The extension office assisted the RDP in applying for "cost-share" funds which helped finance the bridge. Bluebird boxes were made by RDP members and sold as part of the Program's beautification efforts. Several trees were also planted in the community for the same purpose.

Participants represent a mixture of economic classes including part-time farmers, barbers, factory workers, in addition to civic groups such as the Chamber of Commerce. Thus, the program and its activities catered to the community collectively.

Although the RDP was officially terminated at the end of Eisenhower's term as president, and despite limited federal funding and support for rural America in the 1980's, the Butler County RDP continues to generate community spirit and action. The continued progress of this pilot county may be linked, in part, to the community's ability to work collectively in an attempt to meet its needs. Perhaps former Butler County RDP agent Ben Brown's comments concerning true success is one of

the reasons the RDP still plays a major role in the community: in the program's effort to overcome challenges and obtain goals, it acts as a support group for its members. This, in turn, tightens and strengthens the community network, thus making the process as important as the outcome.

SANDOVAL COUNTY, NEW MEXICO
(Interview with F. Marcus, 9-20-88).

The Sandoval County RDP program appealed to a cross-section of citizens including farmers, teachers, local lumber company employees, and highway department employees. The Sandoval County RDP centered on community and economic improvement. The program was intended to enhance the living conditions of all rural people as the majority of rural people in the area had low-incomes.

Sandoval County was composed of several small communities. A RDP club or organization was formed in each of these communities. Citizens were enthusiastic about the purpose of the clubs and the opportunity they provided for community cooperation. The county body submitted several proposals to the RDP for infrastructure installation and upgrading. Yet none of the proposals submitted by the county were ever funded by the RDP, as they never passed the state level screening which would allow them to be reviewed at the Federal level.

The lack of funding and financial aid for RDP projects disappointed the interviewee. He believed the RDP was another government program that made many promises but had very few results. Eventually the interviewee ceased involvement with the RDP because he felt it was not effective.

However, the community clubs continued to function without the aid of the interviewee. The county committee, made up of club representatives, was responsible for installing an area water system and instigating a fire department. Funds for the projects came from the "cost-share" program which was separate from the RDP. Under the "cost-share" program, projects were funded by the federal and state government as well as the community. The on-going activity of the RDP clubs indicates the necessity for community organization in this county. It also illustrated the potential impact that a community action group can have on local development.

TIPPAH COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

(Interview with former RDP agent Ray Sartar, 9-22-88).

The Tippah County RDP was organized into several community clubs. Representatives from local clubs would meet monthly at the RDP County Commission. Leaders and RDP agents ensured that everyone was actively involved in RDP functions. In addition, there was no segregation between white and black members. Low-income or less-educated citizens were as much a part of the RDP actions as local merchants, teachers, professionals, or larger farmers. Some of the organizations that participated in the RDP was the 4-H, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the church.

The Tippah County clubs' "aim" was to satisfy three needs: inspiration, education, and recreation. Inspiration included to self-reliance, leadership, and goal achievement with some religious overtones. Education referred to extension and workshops as well as the formal education system. Recreation included socials, games, and other

communities functions which appealed to all age groups and sectors. These three principles were considered essential to meet the needs of individuals and to develop strong community action group.

Activities of Tippah County continue to be numerous as the local RDP is still active today. The local RDP had several areas of emphasis which have varied over the years according to community necessity. The Tippah County RDP has also had a record of being extremely innovative. Many of its projects have had major results, yet only those programs implemented during the Eisenhower years will be reviewed.

The Tippah County agricultural committee made available to farmers and youth groups, such as the 4-H, a staff of agricultural extension agents. The extension staff encouraged agricultural mechanization, the use of herbicides, and was responsible for promoting and marketing several cash crops in the area. These crops could be produced on limited acreage. Crops included strawberries, peppers, cucumbers, onions, and black-eyed peas. The RDP was responsible for contracting for the sale of these local crops with different companies. Many of these companies were in states such as Georgia, Arkansas, and Tennessee. Pepperage Farms, for instance, was one the companies that had contracts with county RDP farmers.

The Tippah County RDP industrial committee was responsible for conducting labor and economic studies in an effort to attract new industry. Surveys would be conducted by community members upon request of a prospective industry. Further information was provided by the Chamber of Commerce or the county. A special labor study showing skill compatibility was developed to attract Ripley Shoe products, which is

still located in the county. The RDP industrial committee also aided the county in bringing in the first dairy plant. Business start-ups could appeal to the RDP development committee for information concerning innovation, education, industry, labor or feasibility studies. Finally, the committee was instrumental in bringing in an area vo-tech center.

The Tippah County RDP industrial Committee also wrote the first proposal for a county Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP). Twenty thousand dollars in funding was made available for this project under the Rural Area Development Act. These funds provided office space and facilities for a full-time economic development staff. This same office was later adopted by the Federal government which made it a multi-county development agency known as the North East Planning and Development Agency. Once acquired by the government, the essence of the program changed as it was no longer controlled by the "grass-roots" sector.

County Clubs were able to obtain a public water system through a grant from Farmers Home Administration that covered 40-50% of the cost. The grant money was used to install the system and to apply for a 20-25 year loan which was to be paid for with user's fees.

Tourism was another RDP project that had a considerable impact on the county. The RDP started a county fair and composed a brochure about the area. The brochure not only covered recreational facilities such as boating, skiing, and fishing but town amenities that would be of interest to incoming industries. The brochure later won awards for its composition and appearance at the Mississippi State Fair.

Overall, according to the interviewee, the RDP gave extension

leaders a "vehicle" that allowed them to perform their duties in a much more efficient manner. The RDP allowed extension agents to reach more citizens and gain a close working relationship with them. Yet the RDP extension agent was careful to involve community leaders and members so that they had the opportunity to build security and confidence in the local RDP.

Still active today, the Tippah County RDP conducts workshops or field days consistent with perceived community needs. One of the RDP's more recent accomplishments was an energy proposal in the 1970's which outlined how families could save energy at home. The TVA awarded the Tippah county \$5,000 for this project.

ITASCA COUNTY, MN.

(Interview with former RDP agent George Sakas, 10-2-88).

The Itasca County RDP took on several activities including forestry, industrial development, agriculture, and tourism. A variety of actors were involved from both the public and private sectors. For example, representatives from the Agricultural Experimental Station, Soil Conservationists, representatives from the Farm Bureau and the Farmers Union, Milk Producers Association, Cattle Association, the Chamber of Commerce, 4-H, and churches to some degree. Individuals, businessmen, merchants, small and marginal farmers (there were few large farmers in the area at the time) were among the many citizens who participated in the RDP. Initially, these community members were loosely organized into groups to define local problems. Various committees were then formed to handle these problems and needs.

The Forestry Committee was created to find new uses for the

county's large supply of timber. A study was conducted on certain species of timber that were over-abundant in the area. The report listed several commercial uses for these species. For example, one of them was utilized by a small ski manufacturing company which opened in the county. However, a large local paper company discouraged some of these endeavors, possibly due to perceived competition. Development of the Christmas Tree industry was a more successful venture sponsored by the RDP forestry committee. Twenty-four to 30 persons started the Christmas Tree business in the area by utilizing unfarmed land. The industry continues to grow today.

Tourism was another area of focus. Training conferences, assisted by staff from the University of Minnesota, were held for resort owners. Skills in such area as accounting and management were taught at the conferences. The RDP industrial committee, which gathered funds from citizens to start new businesses and industries, was responsible for starting a local ski resort. This ski resort continues to operate today.

In the area of agriculture, studies were conducted on individual farms to help farmers determine the cost of expansion or modernization. Farmers were given realistic expectations concerning the potential of their existing operations. By offering many farmers constructive guidance, they had the opportunity to decide whether to go part-time, commercial, or to leave farming all together. Many decided to seek supplemental employment or to leave their farms as most had small farming operations. The RDP agriculture committee ran demonstration farms, for those who remained in farming, to teach new farming

techniques. Pasture improvement and the introduction of new crops were among the areas of interest. Average-sized farms were assisted in operation expansion. Five of these farms still exist. Finally, a soil conservation district was organized by the agriculture committee. Personnel were hired, with the help of financial aid from the Farmers Home Administration, to check the soil in the district and to give recommendations for conserving it.

Home and family development was also an area of interest. Through constructive guidance, counselling and extension efforts, the Itasca County RDP agriculture committee was able to function as a change facilitator. Small farms were inevitably the targeted group because they made up the majority of area farmers.

A RDP home economics committee was formed with the assistance of the Home Economics County Extension agent. Topics of concern included home management, budgeting, and skills needed to be a wiser consumer. The youth committee and county youth extension agent worked with groups like the 4-H, to improve the quality of life for young people.

Funds for many of the RDP projects were not given directly to the community. Instead, projects were obtained from Federal agencies such as the Farmers Home Administration, the Small Business Administration, or the Federal Forestry Committee, who often dealt in rural issues. These agencies were given extra funds earmarked for RDP projects and were mandated to cooperate with the RDP on both the levels.

When asked what the RDP lacked, the interviewee pointed out the need for on-going rural development research. Like many other Federal Rural programs, studies and projects often cease at the end of an

executive term. Rural research instead should be a continuous effort.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION

The RDP will be assessed according to the degree in which it achieved its central goals. These goals included:

- 1) the program's commitment to the plight of the small farmer and other low-income rural persons;
- 2) the program's ability to mobilize the efforts of the community, including businesses, churches, and civic clubs as well as individuals;
- 3) accomplishment of incremental economic, human, and community development and the actual role the RDP played in these projects;
- 4) the RDP's part in pilot county long-term economic growth and development.

1) PROGRAM'S COMMITMENT

Upon researching RDP projects, reviewing True Morse's plan, and interviewing a number of former RDP agents, the RDP's commitment to small farmers and low income rural persons is obvious. This concern was manifested in the focus of RDP projects.

Agriculture extension was made applicable to small scale farming. For example, as mentioned earlier, the Pulaski-Alexander, Illinois RDP extension agents assisted farmers in producing commercial crops which had high yields yet required little acreage. In addition, RDP agents recognized the need to provide rural off-the-farm employment opportunities for part-time farmers as well as low-income rural citizens. By promoting tourism, value-added production, and industrial development, RDP agents hoped that these groups could continue to live in the county. These actions were also evidence of the RDP's desire to preserve rural living.

True Morse, Under Secretary of the USDA, was sincerely committed to the fate of the small farmer. As discussed in Chapter 1, the policy's commitment to low-income rural citizens was genuine even though funding was limited and among established groups it found little constituent support. Had the emphasis been altered by Morse and other RDP administrators, the RDP may have captured support from interest groups like the Farm Bureau. Despite pressure, this RDP principle was upheld.

Finally, according to interviewees, low-income rural persons and small farmers were the central concern of the RDP. Project emphasis and achievement reflected this concern. For example, the RDP programs in Washington Co., ME, Taney Co, MO., and Bamburg Co. S.C., were successful in efforts to help rural citizens and farmers to continue to farming or to remain in the county.

2) MOBILIZATION

The RDP was very successful in mobilizing community action. This was especially true in those types of counties, discussed earlier, that had some economic diversification (including commercial agriculture). Many of the RDP counties were "ripe" or conditioned to take on the responsibilities of the RDP. For these counties, community interdependence, organization, and action was necessary and a bit natural. The RDP simply afforded communities a formal organization which gave members the opportunity to mobilize ideas. Another development program like the RDP would have had similar results.

The RDP did bring about comprehensive community organization for the first time in some communities. This was evident in the Butler Co., Kentucky and Sandoval Co., N.M.. In fact, RDP groups still continue to

meet without governmental RDP support as the structure offered a means for community support and action.

The RDP mobilized a cross-section of individuals and organizations. Merchants, teachers, and better educated farmers were commonly members. With the exception of the church, civic, business, and non-profit organizations were limited in number and rarely participated in the RDP. Citizens usually became members on an individual basis. The RDP's efforts to include small farmers and lower income people were not always fruitful (with the exception of Tippah, MS.). Many did become recipients of RDP activities as the projects usually centered on their needs.

In those counties that were less integrated, both economically and socially, the RDP's efforts to mobilize community efforts were very limited. As in the case of Summers Co. W.V., and Bamberg Co., S.C., program organization and planning was the responsibility of RDP agents.

3) ACCOMPLISHMENT OF DEVELOPMENT/ROLE OF THE RDP

The incremental accomplishments of the RDP were numerous. This was especially true in those areas where members had some risk capital and intensive, long-term extension efforts were required for change.

In several cases, as suggested by Paalberg in Chapter 1, RDP projects could have been accounted for solely by Federal agencies. He argues that the RDP was not always necessary and that some changes would have occurred in any case. As noted by Taney Co., MO. and Sandoval Co., N.M. agents, this was true to a degree. Financing and additional technical assistance often came from other agencies and programs. Because the RDP had limited resources and funds, its major role was to

initiate action and volunteerism. The education bond passed in Butler Co., Kentucky would most likely not have been raised without the momentum it gained from the RDP. According to the Washington Co., Maine RDP agent, without the RDP, some activities, such as infrastructure related projects, would not have occurred.

Incremental success in some counties was dependent upon the action and leadership of RDP extension agents. Both Summers Co., W.V. and Bamberg Co., S.C., were examples of these types of counties. Lack of community support may have limited the outcome of RDP projects as well as confine the scope of the program to the farm and home unit. All county agents that were interviewed reported at least one project failure, ineffectiveness in reaching all community members, and a lack of funding needed to implement RDP projects. Results were, therefore, mixed at best.

4) LONG-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Measuring the long-term success of any development program is difficult. While many examples of tangible progress can be cited, including cases of infrastructure improvement, development of a cash crop or a factory, quite often, results are intangible. Intangible accomplishments may include human capital development, like gaining skills needed for community organization, support, and action. Both tangible and intangible results are only one portion of the overall integrated development process.

The RDP was not designed to induce long-term growth, development, and change, it merely tried to enhance the existing situation in a county. Unlike in the 1930's, development forces such as public

industry projects or jobs, outside resources, or even considerable government funding, were not a part of the RDP development strategy. In many regards, this left the program with little authority and ability to bring about development.

The role of the RDP in long-term, extensive development was circumstantial and fragmented at best. However, its significance in many counties should not be underestimated. Development of a community is similar, in some respects, to the growth and development of a child. Several factors contribute to a child's maturity. Some factors are more influential than others, but all have a part in the incremental growth progress. For example, teaching a child to read is a major accomplishment, but can a child concentrate on learning if he has a tooth ache or requires glasses? The development of a child is extremely complex, to take away even one small variable could alter the course of his growth.

The development of a community is also contingent upon many factors and while a strong economy is perhaps the major force behind growth, other factors contribute to development. Before industry can be situated in a community, infrastructure, utilities, and qualified workers are needed. By assisting communities in accomplishing these tasks, the RDP played a part in the integral process of area growth.

The development of intra-community bonds and relationships was, in some regards, the most substantial opportunity afforded to many communities by the RDP. This is true in that community support offers local citizens a refuge during economic crises and government cut-backs. A strong community network may also be the only source for mobilization

and action. As noted earlier in the interview with former Butler Co. RDP agent, true success occurred in those situations when community members, themselves, accomplished goals.

THE RURAL AMERICAN CRISIS OF THE 1980'S

In the 1980's, this scenario has now become the cliché of the agricultural sector in this country. American agriculture faces a crisis. It is a crisis of lost market shares, low farm prices, high production costs, high interest rates and changing government policy, and the price paid is the loss of large numbers of family farms.²⁰⁴

As in the 1950's, the rural America of the 1980's is experiencing a crisis of change. Poor agricultural and energy markets, coupled with limited state and federal rural aid, has paralyzed several rural communities. The essence of rural America is threatened by the decline of the more traditional farm population and further net out-migration. Hobby farms which comprise most of the part-time small farms in the 1980's are not at risk. Instead, the rural crisis of the eighties has put the family farms in danger.

Unlike the 1950's, manufacturing has evolved as the largest employer in rural areas. Thus, the future and livelihood of many small towns is contingent upon their ability to make a transition from a primarily agricultural service economy to that of manufacturing.²⁰⁵

The conservative attitude in Washington left states, localities, and the private sector responsible for many programs and needs with little Federal funding. The present political philosophy, federal budget shortages, and a desire by Washington to instill competition among public agencies and programs, impedes coordination and efficiency among governmental agencies.²⁰⁶ The challenging economic times and limited public support has crippled many small towns and rural areas.

I) Historical Background

American farmers entered the 1980's buoyant with confidence. The "Global 2000 Report", published by the U.S. Government, was extremely optimistic. The report predicted that the global demand for food would greatly increase and that prices would double.²⁰⁷

High expectations encouraged farmers to expand their operations. They were confident that increasing their land value would provide a sufficient borrowing base for the following year. Instead, the farm economy began to collapse as interest rates rose sharply, driving up the value of the dollar and reducing foreign demand for farm exports, farmland prices and farm commodities plummeted.²⁰⁸ This was due to increased world production of not only grain but oil and natural gas. Because rural economics were often dependent upon energy and farm incomes, they were severely affected by increased global production.²⁰⁹

Deregulation of both the banking and trucking industries, under the Reagan Administration, has also had negative affects on the rural economy. For example, deregulation of banking facilities has brought about consolidation of rural banks with larger, urban-based banking institutions. While consolidation may bring about more efficiency, there may be reluctance on the part of these institutes to invest in rural areas. There is also a question as to whether or not the urban-based financial institutes are prepared to deal with the boom/bust cycle so common in rural areas.²¹⁰ Those small towns dependent upon railroads to export goods were affected by the deregulation of transportation. However, it has been argued that the trucking industry has grown since deregulation has become less expensive. Trucking has

thus "taken up the slack" for the railroads in many instances.²¹¹

Finally, because of the strong U.S. dollar in the early 1980's and long term trends, rural manufacturers, (as well as other U.S. manufacturers), lost much of their market to foreign suppliers.²¹² In addition, many US manufacturers went overseas for cheaper labor. The earlier forecast, concerning the agricultural economy, therefore proved erroneous.

Due to these factors the farm population declined substantially in the 1980's (approximately 49% between 1980 and 1985). See Figure 1, U.S. Farm Population from 1960-1980, yet production levels did not change.²¹³

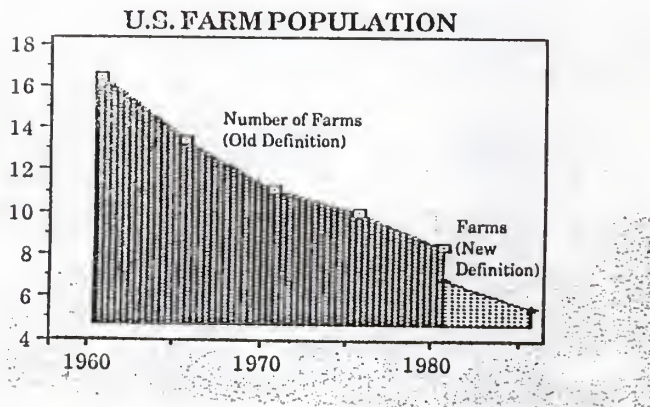


FIGURE 4-1, U.S. FARM POPULATION, 1960-1980
(Source: The Embattled Farmer, 1987, p. 24)

The median age for the family farmer is 36.5 which is somewhat higher than the average age of U.S. citizens, 31.4. Out-migration of young rural adults accounts for part of this difference. Few young adults find it financially feasible to either take over their parents farm operation or begin one of their own.

Over one million of those American families still in farming were dependent upon off-farm rural jobs for a large part of their annual

income in 1984.²¹⁴ The amount of hobby farmers or those who farm less than two days a week on farms under 50 acres and earn almost all their income from outside employment²¹⁵ is not indicated in this estimate. Hobby farmers farm to gain the virtues of rural lifestyle.²¹⁶ Profits are limited, hobby farmers usually sell less than \$10,000 in produce a year.²¹⁷ Hobby farmers represented a substantial portion of American small farms beginning in the 1970's, and continuing at a rapid rate through the 1980's.²¹⁸ In fact, hobby farmers made up 70% of the 2.3 million U.S. "farming" operations in 1986.²¹⁹ Thus, while the number of large and medium-sized farms decreased in the 1980's, those hobby farms, with sales of less than \$1000 rose.²²⁰

II) Rural Policy and the Political Environment in the 1980's

The Reagan administration has maintained a policy of dual federalism during the 1980's. Farm policy, as in the case of several other administrations, has been the overriding force in rural policy. For the most part, responsibility and funding for rural development, like so many other domestic issues, has been transferred to the private sector, states, localities, and competing public agencies.

Among the farm bills passed during the 1980's are Payment-in-Kind (PIK), and the 1985 Farm Bill. The PIK program encouraged farmers not to cultivate some of their acreage. In return they received grain from government storage. Seventy-eight million acres were enrolled in this program which cost \$10.7 billion dollars, yet the farm economy continued to collapse. The 1985 Farm Bill offered subsidies to farmers but did not increase price supports. It is argued that lower price supports are essential in making American agricultural products more attractive

for exportation.²²¹

An office of Rural Development Policy was established in 1981 only to be abolished in the mid-1980's. The office's major objectives were to compare rural development strategies, coordinate rural development efforts within the USDA as well as other federal departments and private agencies. In addition, the office was to operate the Area Development Assistance Grant program and act as the Executive Secretariat for the National Advisory Council on Rural Development.²²²

The purpose of the National Advisory Council on Rural Development was to indicate rural problems and to support administration efforts in rural development. Membership was made up of a group representing farmers, agri-business, educators, and others from all regions of the nation.²²³

In 1983, the Reagan administration sent Congress a document outlining its rural development policy entitled Better Country: A Rural Development Strategy for the 1980's. The policy act was disappointing to many of its sponsors because it severely limited Federal involvement.²²⁴ According to the policy, the private sector was expected to create the tax base, jobs, and income essential to solving the crises in Rural America.²²⁵ The policy was also compatible with the "trickle down" theory of economic development.²²⁶ As stated in Richard Long's work, it:

. . . encouraged untargeted, market-directed economic growth. This preference for development through private initiative, with neither governmental encouragement nor interference translates into a policy of reducing the number and size of public programs for rural development and strengthening the Nation's economy as a whole. The growth of the entire economy, it [was] presumed, [would] be shared fully by rural areas . . ."²²⁷

This helps explain why a considerable amount of federal funding was used to "bail-out" individual farmers through such programs as PIK and the 1985 Farm Bill. Yet few funds were made available to communities for over-all development strategies. Policy makers believed that aiding the individual would also save his community yet the deregulation of banking and transportation had mixed results.

Consistent with dual federalism, assistance to states declined and federal revenue sharing was abolished leaving states with tight budgets.²²⁸ Federal loans and spending for rural development were reduced. Despite the fact that states and localities were already overburdened, formal policies and systematic strategies for rural development, for the most part, were to be taken on by the State government. The federal government refused to take a legitimate role in rural development and failed to supervise or critique the state and local rural policies.²²⁹

In addition to taking little action, the Reagan administration instilled competition, as opposed to cooperation and communication, between governmental agencies and among the different levels of government. Competition, as in the private sector, was perceived as healthy and would promote innovation.²³⁰ Thus, measures to harmonize intergovernmental (vertical) activities and horizontal (between public agencies) efforts were limited. This was despite the fact that such an approach to decision making did not control for duplication of activities.

While the job of the Office of Management and Budget was to vertically coordinate policies among departments, its staff was too

small to effectively perform this task. As noted earlier, the Office of Rural Development played a passive role of harmonizing programs.²³¹

Vertical coordination that affected rural development was also curtailed during the Reagan years. During the 1980's "ad hoc" multi-state development regions which coordinated area programs, were abolished (with the exception of the Appalachia Regional Commission and the Tennessee Valley Authority). Multi-county districts, which coordinated activities among counties, had little or no formal control over the localities they served. Finally, most planning grant programs that assisted communities in applying for various government aid, were terminated.²³²

III) The RDP as a Development Tool in the 1980's

Upon brief review of the 1980's political environment, parallels and contrast can be drawn between the 1950's and the 1980's. In both cases a conservative executive administration dominated Washington. Federalism was discouraged as the private sector at the "grass-roots" level was expected to handle rural affairs. Rural policy in both instances, therefore reflected the "laissez faire" outlook of both administrations.

The Eisenhower administration, however, did create a Federal Rural development program. While conservative in scope, policy designers recognized the need for an active program that facilitated community support, action, and change. The Reagan administration, on the other hand, has made little attempt to implement, coordinate, or finance rural development. Merely passing on the authority to a deregulated private sector and the already over-burdened states and localities

without supervision does not suggest a remedy. As demonstrated by RDP policy makers, conservatism does not offer an excuse for irresponsibility or unaccountability. Instead, conservatism defines boundaries in which policy solutions can be designed and implemented.

1) Utilizing RDP policy Strategies in the 1980's

A. Coordination and Organization

One of the most important accomplishments of the RDP was to provide a clearinghouse for ideas from local citizens and leaders. The Rural Revitalization Plan of 1988 is attempting to do this, too. Coordination between the public agencies, local government, and private sector was essential. By establishing committees at all levels of government and by earmarking agency funds for rural development, the RDP promoted cooperation. For example, as mentioned by George Sakas, former RDP agent in Itasca, MN., it was mandatory that various agencies send representatives to state level meetings in addition to local ones. These actions helped to create strong communications, prevent duplication of programs, and better utilize resources. The RDP suggests a plausible alternative to the competitive approach of the Reagan administration.

The many examples of successful RDP development projects are proof that the coordination of public and private efforts is an effective, less wasteful approach to implementation. These examples may be found in many of the short-term goals accomplished by the RDP such as infrastructure installation, new approaches in agricultural extension, and developing new industry. Some of these are more applicable to the 1980's rural situation than others. Perhaps the more important projects

were those that allowed the RDP to play a successful role as change agent and community maintenance.

B. Change Agent

One of the most crucial contributions a program can make is community maintenance. As demonstrated by many county RDP programs, an all-encompassing community organization can provide an essential support group for citizens. Such community organizations offer social maintenance, and emotional support that provides temporary refuge for many, especially during an economic crisis.

Considering the crises of the 1980's, an active program, like the RDP, could have been used to facilitate change. Project ideas borrowed from the RDP might include vocational and technical training for alternatives in employment, planning and agricultural zoning, resource analysis, developing new cash crops, and general economic development. Industrial development strategies might include value-added production, attracting new industry, aiding start-ups and building infrastructure suitable to industry.

2) Consideration in Adopting RDP Policy Strategies

While the RDP offers various policy options, there are several issues that must be considered in applying such policy approaches in the 1980's. Policy makers should be aware of the many contrasts between the two eras and, thus, must adjust policy strategies accordingly. The following sections address pertinent economic and political factors and theories which should be considered in RDP policy application.

a) Under the RDP, economic development strategies centered on the community and local resources. Yet as the market place extends

beyond national borders, is deregulated, specialized, and becomes more complex, one must question the ability of a micro-economic development approach to penetrate a macro-economy. As a result, smaller local businesses, government, and community organizations are less potent and in many cases, struggle to overcome such ominous economic forces.²³³

b) In addition to the shrinking authority, a locality may have in the marketplace, many communities have received limited public funds. Yet, is providing funds to some communities and small towns feasible due to budget shortages? Alternatives may include:

1) Concentrating limited public dollars in "growth centers" may be one option.²³⁴ The growth center theory implies that states and regions should concentrate limited public dollars in larger towns or centers where there is a "critical mass" of people. Thus, as opposed to decentralizing finite resources, planning, infrastructure, and development funds would be pooled together and used in areas where they will be most effective and benefit more people.²³⁵

2) On the contrary, it has also been argued that the growth pole theory is erroneous. This is based on the fact that many small towns in rural areas are now manufacturing centers as opposed to marketing ones.²³⁶ Under this notion, many small communities should continue to strengthen and diversify their manufacturing base. The community and the private sector (e.g., bankers) would be essential in this effort. Public efforts would be essentially helping in the areas of employee training (including financing, marketing, or technical skills) and in providing community leaders with consultation.²³⁷

c) Considering the situation in rural America in the 1980's,

should the total responsibility of rural development be placed in the care of the USDA?

Failure by the Federal, State, and Regional governments to deal more effectively with the rural crises will lead to deterioration of many small towns, and a substantial decrease in the number of "family farms", and continued rural out-migration.

By providing aid to farmers through such programs as PIK, as opposed to investing some in the rural communities themselves, small communities will no longer be able to afford public facilities, extension, and economic development programs (including those located in the periphery of the growth centers). Deregulation will continue to hurt smaller family farmers and small rural businesses. This will be the case because larger, urban-based financial and business institutions who bought up home-owned institutions, will be more reluctant to invest in rural communities. As family farms and small businesses continue to dwindle in number, so will that of the service sector. The private sector, which has been depended upon to take care of community maintenance can no longer be counted upon because it will no longer be as vibrant as in previous times.

Out-migration to urban areas has serious consequences in that many urban employment pools cannot absorb migrants in their work-force. Many rural people may also lack the necessary skills needed to obtain gainful employment in these areas. Policy-makers must consider the option of creating a responsive rural development policy today, or dealing with aggregated urban economic and social problems tomorrow.

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**THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:
A HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT OF RURAL POLICY
UNDER THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION AND
ITS APPLICATION TO THE "FARM CRISIS" OF THE 1980'S**

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ABSTRACT

Rural America in the 1980's has been challenged by many of the same forces it did in the 1950's. These include, for example, a collapse in the agricultural economy and net out-migration. In both periods, a "Laissez Faire", decentralized political philosophy dominated the White House. Heavy reliance was thus placed on the private sector as opposed to that of the public. The analysis of rural policy ideas and implementation techniques in the 1950's may therefore provide valuable policy strategies for the 1980's.

The Rural Development Program (RDP), instigated under the Eisenhower Administration in 1955, was the first comprehensive rural development program sponsored by the Federal government. The RDP offered solutions to the rural crises of the 1950's that were consistent with the current political and economic views. The principles of the RDP stressed the use of both the private and the public sector and reserved "grassroots" control. Due to the historical parallels between the 1950's and the 1980's, many of the RDP concepts, policy solutions, and implementation strategies should be considered and studied in addressing the rural crises in the 1980's.