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RURAL DEVELOPMENT

is national development

ATIGHTLY HELD MYTH supports the idea that rural life is so distinct from city life that we need separate policies and agencies for each. This may very well have been the case a century ago, but it is sheer nonsense in this decade. We are now an urban-industrial-technological society. The revolution in transportation and communication of the past 70 years has now fashioned a reasonably common set of values for all who are a successful part of our national economic, social and political system. The people left behind have simply not kept pace with these changing values. They maintain last century's values, social systems and practices.

Specialization

With the development of the urban-industrial-technological society has come specialization in the training and education of people, and huge specialized organizations to carry out society's functions. This development has also led to a great deal of interdependence in all social and economic areas. It has been further complicated by an increasing dependence on the public sector for economic growth and development decisions, as well as services provided by growing public units. The present-day successful organization is the one that can coordinate both the private and public sector.

Recent congressional action (HR 12931) directs the Secretary of Agriculture to coordinate and initiate or expand research and development efforts related to rural problems of water supply, sewage and solid waste management, housing and industrialization. Here we go again! The myth gets reinforcement.

Some background on the problems of rural areas is in order. Rural poverty is a reality. Rural incomes average well below city incomes. Thirty-five percent of the United States population resides in rural areas, but 48% of the poor live there. Available measures of rural health, housing, education, manpower training, and vocational education indicate that the rural sector is rapidly becoming the "have not" portion of our society.

Viewing the rural poor as a separate problem in the development of human and economic resources stands in the way of making inroads. It is clear that the nation needs to decide on national policies and goals for *all* people. Once having made these determinations, work on relevant strategies and institutions will be necessary to face the problems involving the interlocking nature of poverty and society.

The Division of Agricultural Sciences of the University has an obligation to assist government decision-makers in Washington. Piecemeal and uncoordinated efforts made in a planless fashion will not solve the problems of the poor in the rural ghettos, nor will they help us achieve our national goals—especially if we don't know what they are.

It is appropriate for us in the Division of Agricultural Sciences to refrain from being seduced into Washington style fractionated planning. Careful planning about the proper role of the Division of Agricultural Sciences is sorely needed. How can we best assist in remedying the inequities of our society as they relate to the poor? We must get our house in order by planning not only a destination but the most judicious journey.