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A study of some community organization techniques utilized by social workers in the rural areas of the United States 1933-1945

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A STUDY OF SOME COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION TECHNIQUES UTILIZED
BY SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE RURAL AREAS OF THE UNITED STATES
1933—1945

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE ATLANTA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL
OF SOCIAL WORK IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

BY

MAYME INEZ BUTLER

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
JUNE 1946
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Comparatively little has been written on rural community organization. In recent years we have come to realize that the needs of a rural community can best be served through organization, the objective of which is to build a program which will bring better living to people in the country and achieve for a rural community the greatest good, within the resources it can command.¹

Most of the rural communities in this country are small, centering in villages of one hundred to three hundred inhabitants. The small villages had only a few recognized institutions: the school, the church, maybe a farmers' association, possibly a blacksmith shop, one or two general stores, and a feed mill. There was no problem of organization.

As a result of improved communications—the telephone, the automobile, and the radio—available activities of the larger villages have multiplied so that many interest compete for the time and energies of individuals of the smaller communities. Because this is true, there arises an evident need for some means of consensus and united action on community matters.

Although there are certain problems peculiar to rural communities the definition of community organization set forth by Sanderson and Polson may well serve for either urban or rural areas: "Community Organization is a process of integration of existing groups or organization, or the development of more of them to satisfy unmet social needs."²

Purpose of Study

A two fold purpose motivated this study: (1) to determine what techniques are used to further community organization in the rural areas of the United States; and (2) to offer some suggestions that may be helpful to social workers in rural or urban communities.

Scope of Study

There is need for the focusing of attention upon the functional areas of social services in rural communities—planning, public relations, financing, and research.

This study consists of a narrative descriptive presentation of some of the techniques utilized by social workers in community organization in rural areas of the United States from 1933 to 1945 with special emphasis on the functional areas mentioned above.

Method of Procedure

The writer compiled a bibliography of Rural Community Organization. From this list, books, pamphlets, periodicals and unpublished material were chosen from the Atlanta University Library, from the United States Department of Agriculture, Extension Service and from the office libraries of some of the instructors of the Atlanta University School of Social Work. After reading these over carefully an outline was made of specific items or techniques found in the functional areas of social work, i.e., planning, public relations, financing and research.

After making an intensive research of certain books, pamphlets and documents by authorities and writers in the professional field of Rural Community Organization, the writer attempted to analyze and give some interpretation to the material presented in this thesis and to prevent specific conclusions derived from the findings.
CHAPTER II

PLANNING FOR RURAL AREAS

The recognition of a need is a step in the direction of solving any problem. That there is a recognized need for planning for rural areas is evidenced by the wealth of publications in this particular field. Cole and Crowe point out that "basically, the only sane defense for planning is the promotion of the common weal. Rural planning is about people, even those phases of it which appear at first glance to be far removed from people."1

States and communities have frequently appointed planning commissions, or voluntary and unofficial groups have been organized to prepare long range plans to guide the development of a community or an area.2 The latter procedure was utilized by Greenville County, South Carolina.

The Greenville County Plan

In 1936 Greenville County set about seeing what it could do by way of marshalling its assets more effectively through community organization and adult education to meet some of its needs and solve some of its problems. It believed it had in its existing organizations and institutions, in its people and their leaders, in its soils, scenery, and industries, the ingredients for a better level of living if these could be organized more effectively. Its interests were as wide as the basic human activities of getting a living, making homes, educating youths and adults, using leisure well, improving health, strengthening religion, helping the disadvantaged and governing efficiently.3

This enterprise in Greenville County, known as the Greenville County Council for Community Development, was the combination of ideas advanced

2Joanna C. Colcord, Your Community (New York, 1941), p. 83.
3Edmund de L. Brunner, Community Organization and Adult Education: A Five Year Experiment (Chapel Hill, 1942), p. 3.
by four leaders—two of whom worked in Greenville County—a university professor, a graduate student, a denominational college president and another school administrator. All four approached the same foundation—the General Education Board. The Board's reaction to the proposal can best be seen from its Annual Report for 1935-36 which is as follows:

The proposal embraced education from the kindergarten through adulthood; library service, public health and social service, economic stability, cultural advantages, interracial understanding, rural-urban cooperation, unified administrative direction, and a training ground for students of three or more institutions of higher learning in the actual experiences of life in these activities. It represented a type of community experimentation for the purposes of realizing such better understanding and use of available resources. The Board made an appropriation of $80,000 to the Greenville County Council for Community Development to aid its demonstration over a five-year period on a diminishing scale, with the expectation that the community will gradually take over and continue the support of the services established.

Few people in the county knew anything about the enterprise until the announcement of the grant was made, but the county officials did know and had confidence in the chief local leaders who launched the enterprise.

The county possessed, too, effective agencies at the time the Council was organized. There was a Community Chest which enabled the cooperation of about a dozen agencies. There was a county library, which, of course, included service to the city. Agricultural and Home Economics Extension had been organized for years under the pattern of relationship with the State Agricultural College. The Council from the outset expressed its general purposes in terms of coordination and community organization.

Initial steps in organization.—Twenty-four persons from twenty three institutions, agencies, and organizations in the county came together at a preliminary meeting to form the body that should receive the

1Ibid., p. 5.
2Ibid., p. 6.
3Ibid.
fund if granted. After the grant was made, stress was laid at the first Council meeting upon the necessity for coordination. A staff was already forming. The Education Director and the Activities Director had been appointed and were present at the meeting. At the end of this first meeting, the Council submitted its considerable agenda of unsolved problems to an Executive Committee.¹

For the first three months after this meeting the Executive Committee convened weekly to examine various areas of life in Greenville County and to make tentative plans. Members of the Committee heard reports on the health set up, reports from representatives of recreation agencies, and listened to several suggestions and requests; reports from the head of the Negro Center. Two colored assistants, a nurse and a recreation leader, were given to the Negro Center by the County Council almost immediately. The Executive Committee also acted upon staff needs and selections. These early meetings were held during the summer when committee members' load was light. As fall approached and a staff assembled, the Committee was relieved of so many meetings.

Staff.—The roster of staff was completed before November 1, 1936. The staff was composed of, in addition to the two persons already mentioned, a specialist in government, one in arts and crafts, and another in public health. College Faculty members accepted full staff membership. Others, especially in economics and dramatics participated on certain projects. The staff was a clear representation of the various branches or agencies of the county. It was no easy job to coordinate the total program but a large measure was secured through the appointment of qualified staff members designated as coordinators. Each staff member began by getting acquainted

¹Ibid., p. 22.
with the county and its citizens in their own areas of interest. The Executive Committee helped in establishing contact. Every invitation to speak was accepted. During the first year more than seventy organizations were touched in this way.¹

By the middle of the second year, five major approaches to community development were clearly defined and were being pursued. These approaches received different emphasis at various times during the remaining years. The following is a presentation of the approaches taken by the Council:

1. Assistance to organization and leaders
   (a) Leaders concerned with solving their problems or improving their techniques were given source material, personal advice, and training courses. Committees and organizations were similarly helped in planning or carrying out their activities.
   (b) Many organizations operating in the same area were helped to work together by the disinterested leadership of the Council.

2. Organization of new agencies
   The best policy the Council found, by and large, was cooperation with existing agencies, persuading them to enlarge their scope to take in untouched areas. But many parts of Greenville County were practically unorganized and needed the stimulation of a new agency such as a council or a dramatic club. There were a few fields such as adult education for the general public in which no agency was equipped to function. Therefore, the organization of a few new agencies was promoted.

3. Education of college students
   Practical training in understanding their communities, in recognition of existing problems and techniques of overcoming them, in working with people and in leadership was offered to students of the cooperating college. In-service training to teacher—leaders was also attempted as requested.

4. Community Councils
   Community Councils were organized because it was found easier for people to think and act in terms of their local communities than in terms of a whole county. Their purposes were the encouragement of good fellowship and individual growth, and the solution of community problems.

5. Social planning and action by interest committees
   People interested in a general area, such as health or government or marketing, were brought together and to work toward solving common problems.²

¹Ibid., p. 29.
²Ibid., p. 32.
The techniques followed in the Greenville County plan appear to be these in summary form:

1. Stimulating great interest in a problem and getting all groups to want to do something.
2. Clarifying the problem by careful committee deliberation.
3. Studying the problem on a factual basis.
4. Actually making changes in the light of the then existing circumstances.
5. Utilizing the personality of leaders on a "case work basis."
6. Drawing up recommendations by expert consultants. Local consideration and modifying of recommendations as the exigency of a change in development indicated.

The development of the Greenville County Plan as has been demonstrated, grew out of the organization of voluntary and unofficial groups. The plan as it evolved might have been the results of activities of a county planning board.

County Planning Boards

According to the 1935 report of the National Planning Board,\(^1\) county planning agencies are growing by leaps and bounds. The American Civic Annual revealed eighty-five county and regional planning agencies in 1935.\(^2\)

Some desirable practices in the organization and administration of county planning boards are set forth by Cole and Crowe as follows:\(^3\)

1. Clear recognition of two types of planning procedures, namely, short-range and long-range planning, looking towards the future growth and development of the country.
2. The Board members should constitute a voluntary, non-salaried committee, appointed by the chairman of the county governing body.
3. Board members should be appointed for a period of three to six years.
4. Technical staff members should be salaried and should be selected on the basis of merit.
5. Close affiliation with the county court or County Board of Supervisors is most essential for the proper functioning of the board. Funds for the administrative work of the Board should be furnished by the county.
6. Meetings should be once or twice a month.
7. Meetings of the board should be open to the public.
8. A continuous educational program and full publicity should be given the Board's activities and reports. Activities should be planned so that a continuous program is underway, thus eliminating the danger of public interest.
10. Standing, or permanent, Committees should be avoided. Committees should be appointed for definite projects. After their work is completed, they should be dissolved.
11. A definite agenda should be prepared in advance of each meeting.
12. Close cooperation should be maintained with the State Planning Board and City Planning Commissioners.
13. Projects for the improvement of the counties should be cleared through the board.
14. Lay members should decide questions of policy, while technical decisions should be made on the advice of technical experts.
15. The board may well act as a buffer between vested interests and pressure groups and county officials.

The Chester County (Pennsylvania) Plan

The Chester County Plan presents one method for attacking welfare problems from an all-inclusive viewpoint, and for this reason is presented here. It has advanced a "four commission plan," the substance of which is described as follows:

A. The Four Commissions
1. The Health Commission which is composed of elected delegates from health and other interested agencies throughout the county places emphasis upon public health nursing, health education, pre-school health

examinations, and the problem of providing the services of a public health specialist.

2. The Library Commission which is composed of elected delegates from libraries and other interested agencies has the duty of seeing that the county is provided with the services of a trained librarian.

3. The Social Service Commission which is composed of delegates from social service agencies and other interested agencies acts as an educational clearing house. It has the duties of the planning and supervision of the social service exchange, the printing of a social service directory and the employment of a trained social worker to carry out the work of the commission.

4. The Recreational Commission which is made up of representatives from recreational agencies and other interested groups is charged with the full supervision over all recreation work within the county, in addition to the responsibility of employing a trained director of recreation to carry out its work.

Diagrammatically, the four-commission plan of organization as used in Chester County is as follows:¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Recreation and Social Agencies, as Y.W.C.A., Y.M.C.A. Scout Councils,</th>
<th>Recreation Commission elect</th>
<th>Two representatives from each agency plus recreational board</th>
<th>General board responsible for the Council as a whole</th>
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<td>2. Health Agencies, as hospital, medical society Red Cross, dental society, etc.</td>
<td>Health Commission elect</td>
<td>Two representatives from each health agency</td>
<td>Two representatives from each commission and seven members at large</td>
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¹Modified scheme as presented in Cole and Crowe, op. cit., p. 245.
2. Health Agencies (continued)

3. Social Work, as
   Children's Aid, Poor directors, Juvenile courts, welfare associations, etc.
   Social Work Commission
   elect
   Two representatives from each social work agency

4. General Agencies,
   as clubs, granges, churches, schools, league of women voters.
   Library Commissions
   elect
   Two representatives from each agency

Summary

The Greenville County Plan and the Chester County Plan have illustrated the logic in beginning efforts for community planning on a county-wide basis. It must be remembered, however, that the county worker is at the same time working in villages and rural neighborhoods throughout the county. The County Extension Service in Agriculture and Home Economics, or the Grange, or the Farmers' Union, or the Farm Security Administration, as well as schools and church organizations in the more rural sections of the county, can prove valuable allies of the county social worker. Not only are the agricultural organizations extremely valuable in aiding the worker in learning the economic resources of the county and obtaining other factual information, but their programs embody plans for rural community organization. The schools and churches are usually the centers for village and neighborhood social life. It is important that the rural social worker discover the degree of organization and interaction between organizations. Potential and active leadership should be ascertained and cultivated in the same manner that the worker discovers and uses leadership in the county.
seal.

Israeli has pointed out that planning is rooted in trends, tendencies, and conventions of the past and present; it includes thinking about ends to be attained and about means instrumental in their attainment within a set time. "How we think explains partly how we plan." With this view, social workers cannot treat lightly the task of planning for rural areas.

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Focus the story to be told on the audience to be reached and dramatic. Considerable thought has been given to the development of publicity. Although publicity in some form has always been part of societal change, the scale of growth has not been too rapid. From 1920 to 1930, the rise of publicity has been a part of societal change.

With community life, the development and presentation of publicities in these fields is now

accepted as interpretation. Community interpretation having depth as well as

depth in presentation, community interpretation has the depth and social work. Therefore purpose of content of material and as part of mass of information, education and propaganda, societal work in the development of publicity is of great importance. What have in these elements not been

understanding of social interpretation.

According to Helen C. Baker, the chief aim of publicity is to real organization of community forces with some pride.
a year-round program of interpretation. A second stage of development began with the onset of the depression. This stage brought definite critical attitudes toward social work from the public which was submerged with confusion and misunderstanding and which was fearful of increased taxes. It became vitally necessary for social agencies, both private and public, to defend their programs, policies and trained personnel against the public attacks.  

1 Another stage in the development came with the advent of World War II. Since 1941 there has been a necessity and a new opportunity for interpreting social problems, social facts, and social work to the public:

During the past three war years, the so called "man on the street" has become increasingly aware of the fact that certain social ills have a bearing on the rise of juvenile delinquency; he and his wife have become more interested in the facts of nutrition, due to war time rationing and the need for keeping fit to do a wartime job. The conscription of men for the armed services focused attention on physical fitness. The rejection of men at the point of inductions for mental and emotional unfitness, and the much publicized discharge of psychoneurotic servicemen, have been a tremendous impetus to public interest in mental hygiene. Overcrowded defense towns have shown in clear light the evils of substandard housing, the need for wholesome recreation, the causes behind "absenteeism." The factors involved in the readjustment of the returning veteran—reemployment, personal adjustment, the problems of the disabled and the anticipation of the demobilization of thousands of war workers, are causing the general public to consider many of the subjects which are familiar ones in the program of one or several social and health agencies.  

Whether or not the public has consciously recognized this subject matter as belonging to the field of social work and public health, educators have had a new background of interest against which to work.

From the foregoing it is quite evident that the communities have at least awakened to the existence of social work and to the fact that there is an institution that is concerned with doing something for and

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1 Helen C. Baker, op. cit., p. 403.

with people. Social workers have made progress, but they are at the point, it seems, where they should shift their emphasis and interpret their work so that the public will know, not only what they are trying to do and the scope of their jobs, but actually how much of the field they are covering, so that it will have an idea of how little or how much progress they are making. In brief, it appears, social workers must take the public over on to their side of the fence, and let it view the scene from their vantage point.

Media and Techniques

Interpretation as social work is developing it today, is bound up with agency programs and structure; it is the product of more or less consciously defined policy of public relations; it involves participation of the board members, the volunteers, and the professional social worker as well as the professional publicity worker, and makes use of all types of associations, civic groups, newspapers, magazines, booklets, photographs, movies, plays, broadcasts, meetings and informal personal contacts.¹

In rural areas and in all but the largest national, state and local agencies, social workers for the most part do their own interpreting.² They generally do not delegate this function, as they do money-raising publicity, to publicity specialists. It is a widespread conviction that interpretation is essentially a day-by-day job, best carried out by the social worker in the course of her dealings with clients or other persons involved in some way with the affairs of the agency.

An illustration of interpretation in this manner is described by a member of the staff of the Detroit Visiting Nurse Association. Because

¹Natalie W. Linderholm, op. cit., p. 358.
The radio—the radio keeps the farmers informed on public affairs.

The messenger—One of the main sources of local information which

It is the last minute that the radio stations are broadcasting the news. I know when the last minute is over, and the community newspaper was read.

The last minute is when the last minute is read. I read the first half of the news, and the community newspaper was read.

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The last minute is when the last minute is read. I read the first half of the news, and the community newspaper was read.
Community meeting.—The oldest and still perhaps the most general method of disseminating information and understanding is the public meeting. This ranges from the decorous lecture or courses of lectures where the audience takes notes and asks a few polite questions, to the free-for-all of the old-fashioned town-meeting, whose presiding officer bears the significant title of "moderator." Experimentation with the meeting as a device for public information has recently developed new variations, such as the panel discussion, in which speakers discuss a subject informally among themselves with the audience joining in later.

Volunteers.—We are learning that while basic information can be conveyed through pictures and graphs, through the written and the spoken word, to passive readers and listeners, it is mainly through active participation—through discussion, volunteer service, and self study—that the people of a community can be brought actively to care about its development, and personally to engage in efforts for its improvement. With the impact of the war came the necessity of inviting, by both public and private agencies, the cooperation of volunteers. Before the war, public agencies thought volunteers' assistance impractical due to the legal structure of the agency. Another view was that the use of volunteers having no social work training or experience would inevitably mean lowered standards of service to people receiving public assistance. It was further viewed that the use of volunteers would be a serious threat to hard won merit system standards. Some social workers held the view that volunteers were irregular and irresponsible in their work. Those who championed the move for the use of volunteers in welfare programs believed that under professional supervision, volunteers could supplement staff activities and thereby provide increased service to persons in need of assistance. They also believed

1Joanna C. Colcord, Your Community (New York, 1941), p. 234.
that volunteers provide an intelligent support of a public agency's program in the community by achieving a greater understanding of the agency through their work. An interesting illustration of volunteer service bears out the belief of those who championed the use of volunteers:

Interested citizens of Missouri had drawn up a plan for the care of state wards. The Commission prepared reports and legislative recommendations about their various programs for submission to the governor and the Legislature.

At the same time that reports to state officials were being prepared, the matter was discussed with leaders in the town in which the institution was located. The local townspeople were an important source of potential support or opposition and their desires probably would have considerable influence on the Legislature. Two members of boards, which had governed the State Home previously lived in this town and naturally were interested in the suggested changes. Also the members of the Legislature who would feel most closely concerned were the representative from this county and the district senator. When the changing situation in regard to the State Home was explained over a period of time these leaders supported the proposed plans. Some of the civic clubs of the community had the local members of the Legislature present the proposal at their meetings and on their own initiative the clubs voted their endorsement of the plan. News articles about these meetings appeared in the town papers and the matter was widely discussed in this community.

Professional and Lay Cooperation—From the time that the professional staff members reported information to the commissioners, advisory committee, and state officials there was joint participation of professional and lay persons in this consideration of social welfare needs and the modification and creation of resources to meet the needs. When the bill was before the Legislature the lay citizens were in charge of the changes


3 Ibid.
with the professional experts only making recommendations.

In so great an area as the rural population of the United States, it would seem self-evident that the volunteer serves in a multitude of ways. He or she (and many more men serve proportionately than in the city)\(^1\) renders not only those services of the city volunteer, such as leadership in social activities, sponsorship of projects, membership on boards and committees, money-raising, but also acts in administrative and executive capacities, in family investigations, in search of social resources, in clerical and drudgery duties, and in the daily minutiae of social work's details. Volunteers must perform these duties, for there are few professional workers in rural America and hundreds of counties have none. Resources are very scanty in most of the rural areas.

This rural America is where people live on the soil and in small towns. The family is a close-knit unit; the father is the head. A few group interests predominate—the church, the school, the farm organization, the fraternal order. Personal resourcefulness in characteristic of the rural citizen. He is individualistic, yet has a sympathetic neighborliness. He customarily joins with his neighbors for harvesting and other farm labors. He helps when the need appears.

In this setting, the rural volunteer feels the intimacy of social problems. The local needs once discovered, are "felt and seen" needs. Then there is an eagerness to help. A desire to be helpful is not criticized as in the city, for helpfulness in the face of need is considered neighborliness. When the task is generally apparent, a real community spirit is manifest. Community neighborliness becomes organized. The rural volunteer is the result.

These circumstances make the rural volunteer a very practical

worker. He faces facts, not theories. He feels the jolts of the mountain road up the hollow to the needy family; and it is very real to him. Striking capacities for leadership and execution of services are found and are developed on the realistic duties of daily performance. The rural volunteer cannot dodge his responsibility readily; the laborers may be few, and there may be but one professional worker, or none, to take up the slack.¹

The volunteer has a very important place, therefore, in rural social advance. Here are some of the parts he has played, some of the results largely to his credit: Community consciousness of poverty of pellagra-ridden sections, of bad rural housing, of cash crop farming at the expense of subsistence farming, and influencing legislation in behalf of social welfare. The volunteer discovered these problems for himself. He talked of them. He made others aware of them.

¹Robert E. Bondy, op. cit., p. 435.
CHAPTER IV

FINANCING SOCIAL WORK IN RURAL AREAS

There are many ways of financing social work. Several hundred millions of dollars are provided annually through legacies, endowments, taxation, earnings of agencies and community chests. Klein says that "the cost of social work must be measured by the recognized need for its existence and by the social legitimacy of providing it." The rural social worker has a special task to see to it that the community recognizes this need in order that its support of social work may be forthcoming.

Interpretation and Financing

There can be no successful financial campaign without interpretation. Public understanding as to the reality of the need is a must among the constituencies of a successful campaign. Preceding a campaign for funds, the social worker will want to arrange for intensive interpretation. Some media through which this may be accomplished are the newspapers, special meetings, talks to organization and clients. Gertrude Withers has pointed out that the county newspaper is the official organ of interpretation in rural communities; that a call at the editorial office very soon after the arrival of the new worker will prove beneficial. She suggests that a clear, brief interpretation of the agency's function is helpful if the editor is not already familiar with the work. The worker may indicate that she is especially eager for the editor to understand her work because


2 Joanna Colcord, op. cit., p. 41.

she is sure that residents of the county ask him about eligibility requirements and for other information regarding the agency. Miss Withers further pointed out that it is important, too, that the editor receive the impression that the worker's call and future contacts with him are for the purpose of giving information for publicity of the agency's work rather than for any desire for personal publicity; that any time that an open meeting is planned for social workers or groups interested in community social work, the editor should receive a personal invitation to attend.

It is a good plan to observe trade areas in organizing committees and assigning lists. The schools can give invaluable aid in interpretation and financing a rural program. The social worker may ask the schools to make posters and the children to carry home printed material. This will assure a large amount of publicity in all areas of the community.

It has been observed that agencies have conducted house-to-house and farm-to-farm campaigns with success. Another method is for the worker and the members of the board to approach a selected list in each community. It must be remembered, however, that the average amount contributed by the rural donor is smaller than that given in urban areas, consequently the aim of the worker would be for a proportionately larger number of contributors. Because of distances, weather conditions and the demands of farming, more time for soliciting in the open country should be allowed. Social work on a professional basis is practically new in rural areas. A large number of the county residents are skeptical, they tire easily of campaigns, therefore the rural worker and the county board members should take care not to conduct too exhaustive a campaign, and not to conduct an intensive campaign too frequently.

Raising Private Funds

When a campaign is on for private funds the board or a committee of the organization should carry the responsibility. There are few community chests. The average county does not have four or five strong social work and health agencies and the county's planned total budget is not large enough to justify the employment of a chest executive which is absolutely necessary to carry out the organization of a community chest campaign.¹

If a campaign is planned annually the worker and the board should take care to see that it does not conflict with the campaign of other agencies. There may well be joint consultation as to budgets, in view of the total which the agencies expect the community to give during one year. Instead of the annual campaign, the agency may consider the development of a list of contributors, with subscriptions annually renewable over a period of years. This work may be almost entirely the responsibility of a committee, though the board should make one or two of its members responsible for checking upon subscriptions falling due each month and obtaining a certain number of new contributors. If this plan is carefully followed up, aside from the initial campaign no other one will be necessary.²

In planning the dates for a campaign, the worker and the board must keep in mind the farmers' busy seasons, such as harvest time and threshing time. The fall of the year seems to be the best season for raising money. By this time the farmers may have a better idea of what they have to count on for the coming year. In a year of poor crops, the agency should not plan for an extension of work which means an increase in the budget for not only will the farmers be hard put but the banks and the

¹Ibid.
²Ibid., p. 28.
stores which give them credit will be in the same condition.

Leadership.—Good leadership is necessary in every field of endeavor. It is no less needed in the financial program of rural social work. A county will naturally have proportionately fewer leaders than the average city, fewer men and women with devotion, understanding and initiative necessary to the successful conduct of a campaign. It appears that those who care most are often the busiest and must leave the execution of their plans to others who are less able. For this reason a county executive must often give considerable assistance to a campaign committee. Although the county worker’s participation is indispensable, she must exercise her best judgment in the matter, “taking care not to relieve the committee or board of its final responsibility.”

Raising the money.—The worker and the campaign committee may encourage the raising of money in various ways. Money raising by suppers, dances, selling candies, bazaars and other social functions is a time honored country custom.

In one county a teachers’ institute decided to devote all their school programs, home talent plays, and so on to the raising of money for children needing special care. A county receiving home for children organized local branches in every community—sometimes of young people, sometimes of adults—which took a kind of competitive pride in earning money and making gifts of food and clothing to the home. The individual amounts were small but the total was a respectable one.1

Once the money is raised, or even during the campaign, there seems to be one difficulty the board often meets within a county. This is the desire on the part of people in one community that the money raised there be spent there. Special interpretation of community organization as a county-wide undertaking and the interdependence of all sections of the county is the obvious answer although the writer is aware that this point is

1Ibid.
not always easy to drive home, especially where there is rivalry among communities.

Public Financing

Public social work activities may be financed by federal, state, or local governments—counties, cities, and townships. The choice of the level of government to finance social work affects the sources of tax revenue used since the different levels of government rely to a considerable extent on different taxes.

Local taxation.—Local units of government rely heavily on property taxation; approximately nine-tenths of local tax revenues are derived from this source. In recent years certain developments have made property taxation less adequate as a revenue source than it was formerly.

The dependence of local governments on the property tax is due in part to state constitutional or statutory provisions. In the absence of these a very few cities have had fair success in administering sales taxes, while local business privilege taxes and motor licenses have been employed more generally, especially in Southern States. In general, however, most forms of taxation other than those imposed on property have proved too difficult for local administration. Because of the dependence on the property tax, the capacity of local governments to increase their revenues must be ranked below the capacities of state and federal government. In some states, taxes administered by the state are shared with localities to remedy their relative financial inability, while for certain purposes practically all states distribute grants in aid of local


2 Ibid., p. 156.
services.

The ability to collect tax revenues may vary to an extreme degree among different localities even within the same state. These variations make it inevitable that the tax burden to support a program of governmental expenditures, such as for public assistance or public welfare, will be relatively light in some localities and very heavy—perhaps impossibly heavy—in others.

Local and state responsibilities.—The financing of insane care, penal institutions, and certain other forms of special institutional care, and some forms of public assistance, has been assumed in whole or in part by state government. However, with minor exceptions, ordinary institutional relief and traditional poor relief were and still are legally the financial responsibility of localities.

In the case of certain categories of public assistance there has been a distinct trend from local to state financing since the passage of the Social Security Act in 1935.

Recent Development in the Field of Public Welfare Financing

In the field of public welfare financing the obvious trends are from private to public support of welfare activities, and from state government to federal government support.\(^1\) Even before the depression, the growth of state institutions and state plans for old age and mother's pensions were indications of the trend from local to central support, although welfare was still a local problem in 1930. Actual state expenditures were relatively small and federal expenditures were negligible. The rapid change that took place in the following decade is apparent from the following figures.

\(^1\)Mabel Newcomer, "The Social Workers' Stake in the Program of War Finance," The Compass XXV (1943), p. 3.
Percentage Distribution of Welfare and Social Insurance Expenditures, 1944

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Federal</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Insurance</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>100</td>
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The federal social security program—Title I—Grants to States for Old-Age Assistance; Title IV—Grants to States for Aid to Dependent Children; Title V—Grants to States for Maternal and Child Welfare; Vocational Rehabilitation, with provision for "enabling each state to extend and improve, as far as practicable under the condition in such State, services for promoting the health of mothers and children, especially in rural areas and in areas suffering from severe economic distress," has in fact met the problem of states inverse proportion to tax paying ability with half of the cost of public assistance paid from federal funds and the remainder largely from state treasuries.2

The Effect of War Financing on Welfare Financing

The effect of World War II upon the total situation regarding the financing of social work did not present a depressing picture. Welfare societies, youth-building groups, religious associations, and public agencies took on responsibility for extending relief and services to the welfare of millions of men in the armed forces of the United States, and to the needs of the people in the western countries of our allies.

In May, 1941 at a conference called by Community Chests and Councils Incorporated a plan was unanimously adopted which proposed, in time


of war, that each community would organize one war time campaign. This plan led to the spread of state war chests and to the initiation of cooperative giving by people in rural areas.

The efforts of Nebraska presents an enlightening reflection upon the manner in which the rise of state war chests brings opportunities for organized giving to the rural areas.

Nebraska is a state some 400 miles long by 200 miles wide. Located in the Western fringe of the country's corn belt, it lies mainly in the Great Plains region with its almost unlimited expanse of level prairies, large farms, extensive ranches. Its people believe in local control and local operation. This was not denied them in the plans of the National War Fund. The plan of organization is set forth as follows:

To organize this new task proved to be no easy job. It involved the bringing together of the leadership in ninety-three counties to conduct a state-wide campaign and join with the national effort without breaking away from the thinking of the local people. Drawing on the state's limited manpower to set up a new state-wide organization could be no answer. From the start it was evident that already available organization must be used. This was at hand in the form of the State Defense Council with its district plan. The council called a conference of its district leaders and outlined the proposal for a state war fund. All but one accepted the additional responsibilities with enthusiasm and took on the job of organizing the counties within their districts. District meetings were held, while in the counties leadership was provided through the chairman of the county defense councils.

This coordination of efforts resulted in the United War Fund of Nebraska, later affiliated with the National War Fund.

The board of trustees of the corporation included nearly all the ex-governors of the state. It also included ranchers, farmers, and business men. Some ranchers have had to take some of their valuable time from

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3 Ibid.
the herding of livestock or the cutting and putting up of hay in order to journey to the nearest town to attend board meetings. So Nebraska has imprinted upon the minds of its rural population cooperative methods of giving.

It is quite evident from the foregoing examples that local communities must still bear the weight of support of social work in rural areas; that while the raising of money in sections of the county presents a different problem from that in urban areas, careful planning, intensive interpretation, participation of lay leaders, supportive counseling of the social worker and financial aid from the state and federal government greatly facilitate the problem of financing social work in rural areas.

1 Ibid.
CHAPTER V

RESEARCH IN RURAL SOCIAL WORK

More and more, facts are playing an increasingly important role in planning and appraising social programs. The growth of the governmental social services and the trend toward coordination of voluntary services through national agencies have resulted in the extension of current reporting systems and of research studies. Among people who are social conscious—legislators, board members, administrations, and social work staff—there is a wide and growing recognition of the importance of systematic information in drafting social legislation, in supporting requests for funds, in measuring the effectiveness of social programs and the efficiency of their operation, in formulating policy, and in developing new techniques and procedures. Modern social programs are so broad in scope and touch the lives of so many people that research and statistics supply an indispensable chart and guide in their conduct.

Brief History of Research Relating to Social Work

Among the first serious efforts to apply scientific methods to the study of social problems are the social surveys which began with the surveys of Pittsburgh in 1907. The history of social surveys is in a large measure the history of the development of research in the field of social work.

For more than fifty years social work and particularly social case work has been carried on in the United States. It has been conducted,


however, very largely in the cities. Beginning with the first visiting of families in their homes when much of the service was performed by volunteers, a method of family case work has been gradually developed which has not only proved of great value in dealing with families in distress or handicapped in various ways, but also has proved an invaluable aid in other fields of organized service, such as probation, child welfare, psychiatric and medical social service, visiting teaching and the like. This early method was unorganized and dealt with a miscellaneous assortment of problems affecting the individual. This pioneer work, however, led to the orderly development of specialized agencies each working its own field; and in addition, it brought to light needs which have stimulated public and private efforts not only of a remedial but also of a preventive character, such as are seen in the anti-tuberculosis movement, the housing movement and others.

While this has been going on in the cities, it was recently comparatively speaking, that work along similar lines was being developed in the rural districts. The needs of the country have been increasingly recognized, but the volume of work under way even on a relative basis has been on a much smaller scale. The demand for such services in the country at present is rapidly increasing, and the efforts to meet the demands seem to be increasing faster than knowledge as to best procedures to be followed, best types of organizations to be set up, and the number of properly equipped individuals to be drafted into it. Workers in the universities, training schools, and interested social agencies are encountering many questions of policy and practice which require study not possible for those engaged in the exacting daily duties of the service. The materials for study are available; enough has been done, it is believed, to provide a fund of experience which when analyzed and understood will prove a reliable guide in considering and determining methods to be followed in
the future. All but a few of the states have made some sort of provision for some form of rural social work. In order that future plans both as to methods of training workers and as to methods of organizing and carrying on this work may be laid on the soundest basis, it is believed desirable that a thorough study be made of experience to date in social work in the rural sections of the United States.

Scope of Research in the Field

There is no comparable bibliography and discussion of research in rural social work. Reports of projects which have been carried out in this field are scattered through periodical and conference reports. A few however, have been published in book form. Outstanding among these are "Social Work Practice in Three Counties," published by the Social Service Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, "The Personal Side," a publication of the Division of Research, Work Progress Administration, "Research in Rural Social Work," edited by John W. Black, Social Science Research Council and Margaret F. Byington's "Organising a Public Welfare Committee in Spring County." Following is a list of periodicals publishing research studies: Survey Mid-monthly, Survey Graphic, The Family, The Social Service Quarterly, The Annual Proceedings of the National Conference of Social Work, The Social Work Year Book, and the Child.

Need for Further Research

Since social agencies were first established in rural areas the limitations of social work practice in the country, as compared with the city, have been apparent. How to improve the quality of the work has been the concern of all those interested in the development of social agencies in rural sections.
Citizens in rural communities ask why they may not expect the same variety of social work service from their single agencies in the cities. Social workers going into rural work miss the opportunity for professional development available to staff members of well organized city agencies. Organizers of rural social work programs are concerned with administrative factors which facilitate or retard the improvement of practice in rural areas. They want to know what characteristics in the available personnel will meet rural situations most effectively. Supervisors of rural programs are concerned over what they can do to improve practice. Directors of schools of social work ask what they should include in the curriculum for students who prepare for social work in the rural field.

With the extension of social work into practically all rural counties in the last few years, and with the prospect of widespread development of permanent public welfare programs in rural areas in the near future, the problem of raising the quality of rural social work practice has recently become more pressing. Consequently, agencies concerned with the establishment of social work programs in rural areas, and some socially conscious individuals see need to undertake the study of the problem.

Such an interested individual was Margaret F. Byington of the New York School of Social Work. Miss Byington in her "Organizing A Public Welfare Committee in Spring County" sets forth an interesting development of community organization in the predominantly rural county which was studied. She points out that in the organization of a county public welfare committee a social study is the best initial step; that the data to be secured are:

1. What types of relief are granted in the county?
2. What is the present monthly cost of each type of relief and how many people are receiving it?
3. What has been the trend of relief costs for the past years?
4. How are the various public relief agencies in the county organized?
Although the data to be secured in undertaking a study will vary according to the emphasis or approach one wishes to give the survey, the preceding list with necessary modifications should serve as a guide in similar studies.

Sources of Data

In many projects of research, the most important data must be sought from individuals and from social case records. Black points out that the available sources of data fall into two classifications as follows:

1. **Documentary**, which consists of case records, reports, vital statistics, medical reports, and other records maintained by social agencies and institutions. These may be social workers, board of health officials, county health officers, and other individuals and institutions.

2. **Individuals and groups**. These may be social workers, boards of social agencies and other organizations, public officials, doctors, ministers, and other individuals and families.

In the study edited by E. F. Bunting, local information was secured primarily from the executive heads and case supervisors of the various agencies. No study on the economic status of persons applying for relief was made of case records, and no recipients or applicants for relief were interviewed. Statistics on annual relief expenditures were secured through official reports.

References:
1. Margaret F., Bunting, Organising A Public Welfare Committee (New York, 1931).
the cooperation of the state department of social welfare through its Bureau of Research and Statistics and from W.P.A.; employment and payroll data were compiled by the State Department of Labor; monthly figures on relief and work relief wages were taken from published reports of the T.E.R.A., the State Department of Social Welfare, and W.P.A. Figures on current monthly operations were secured directly from heads of the agencies.  

Rural case records for purpose of research.—"The purpose of any social case record is primarily to facilitate the treatment of the case," so that the best case records are likely to omit information needed for the consistent study of any group of cases. In addition to this, Black points out, rural records are likely to be particularly unsatisfactory for several reasons as follows:

(a) Lack of stenographic help and pressure on the worker's time. Available figures about the "case load" in case working agencies, urban and rural, seem to show the rural worker carrying an even heavier load than is common for the urban worker and with fewer facilities for work. She may not have the time to keep up even the minimum records needed for the intelligent conduct of the work.

(b) A fearfulness on the part of the worker less the confidential nature of the case records be violated to the damage of the family concerned and also to the damage of the work in general. Public records may actually be published or open to general inspection. Records of private agencies may become known to persons in the community; become the subject of gossip; and make people who need the agency afraid to turn to it. The worker may, therefore, deliberately omit from the record socially significant facts.

(c) The hurried social worker may, for the reasons shown above, have experimented unsuccessfully with summarized record forms, and may have, besides a meagerly filled-out face sheet, only a brief running summary made from time to time showing the main developments of the case, which will be sufficient as a reminder to herself and to give to a successor a general picture of the situation and what has happened. But in such records, the definiteness and concreteness of detail needed for research and analysis is likely to be lost.

The existing data in public records may consist of nothing except

1 ibid., p. 37.


3 John B. Black, op. cit.
vouchers for expenditures which are likely to be filed in chronological order along with vouchers for other kinds of county expenditures so that all county vouchers for the period studied will need to be sifted to find the ones with which the project is concerned. If any information about a family receiving relief is on record anywhere, it may be in the pocket note book of a county supervisor, which may indeed be a valuable documentary source together with supplementary data given verbally to clarify or complete the record.¹

Even when expenditures from the poor fund are well classified and kept in a separate book with some data regarding the recipient, there will probably be no continuing records from one year to another. Each year is likely to stand alone with nothing to show how long any person has received aid or what social problems were involved in the case or results of aid given.

Certain errors need to be guarded against, even in reading the best case records. Especially in rural work there may be confusion of prejudice of opinion with fact. A person who has long known a family may make statements regarding matters which presumably he is in position to know with certainty, and which may therefore be recorded as facts, but which may really be guesses or opinions.² Careful recording would show the source of such information in such a way that it would stand as the opinion of the informant, a suggestion opening the way to further inquiry and understanding. But careful case reading on the part of the research worker may be needed to distinguish between statements that are tentative, subject to further verification, and those which are certainly true.

¹Ibid., p. 29.
²Ibid., p. 31.
From other sources both documentary and personal, are consulted and weighted the evidence secured in the light of information collected and weighted the known factors which may influence the persons who have been interviewed directly from individuals and groups, and the information secured above should be evaluated in the same care as outlined above.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The frontier of social welfare seems to lie in the rural and semi-rural areas. All the basic case work and group work skills are needed by the rural county worker in addition to a high degree of skill in community organization.

On the basis of reading and interpretation of books, pamphlets, periodicals and unpublished material related to and in the field of rural community organization in order to further community organization, in the rural areas in the United States, and in order to offer some suggestions that may be helpful to social workers in rural or urban communities the following conclusions were reached:

1. Many of the same techniques used in community planning in small towns and communities may be used in large towns and cities.

2. There must be a general plan for a larger unit than any one rural area, whether a farm community, a small town or an entire county.

3. The general plan for rural areas should emanate from a central office, generally state-wide in scope. This is important because a plan for a rural area which is not a part of a bigger plan is likely to lack leadership; the rural area must of necessity realize that it is a part of a bigger unit.

4. There should be centralized leadership.

5. There should be local leadership. When a local unit is planned and organized it is understood that the local worker must also be a community leader.

6. The social worker must "sell" her job to the community. Pamphlets, radio broadcasts, and news stories are important, but nothing matches in power the goodwill that can be generated by the social worker.
in working and in leisure hours, three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

7. A good group of volunteers is indispensable to the worker and to the agency.

8. Recognition, development, and intelligent use of community leadership is of the essence of good community organization.

9. Good research requires time and technical skill beyond that which the rural worker can usually bring. The magnitude and complexity of social work today and its greater concern with basic social factors and economic processes, as well as with planning for the whole community, call for separate research activity by a specially qualified personnel provided with ample facilities.

Unless the American people as a united people solve our political, economic and social problems, we shall risk the grave danger of having solutions offered in a form contrary to our democratic way of life, but perhaps appealing to great numbers who now feel the existing inequalities. Examples have shown that there are many people, not in the ranks of the disadvantaged, who are keenly sensitive to injustices and deprivations. Furthermore, not unknown to social workers, there are many problems besides the economic needs of clients which need solution if our pattern of democracy is to be maintained.
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