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"COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT A STEP IN PROGRESS FOR THE SOUTHEAST"

David S. Weaver, Director
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About 7,000 years ago, which is a relatively short time in history, man became interested in producing his own food--not in catching it or gathering it, and then began to settle and thus civilization began. For the first time man was able to obtain more food than he really needed and consequently there were not as many people needed to secure the food; therefore, we had surplus labor. This surplus labor could do something else other than the production of food, and so specialization began. Probably these first people relieved of food production went into the making of weapons, pottery, cloth, and the basic needs of the time; and as they stayed in those specialized jobs they became more skillful and turned out not only more products but better products. And so this process of specialization, improving the quality and reducing the cost of commodities, began about 7,000 years ago.

This has continued to a point that here in America we need only about 12% of our population to feed us. Economists, sociologists and others tell us that this will soon be 10%, maybe 8%, and possibly even as low as 5%, leaving 95% to do the other fine things that we need to do to maintain our high standard of living in this country.

In America we have reached a height never attained by any other nation in this regard. We produce about 1/3 of the world's steel, 1/2 of the world's coal, 1/2 of the world's crude oil, 40% of the world's milk; we own about 90% of the world's bathtubs, 48% of the world's radios, 58% of the world's railroads, 60% of the world's telephones, 80% of the world's automobiles and trucks, 90% of the

world's television sets, and we manufacture about 50% of all the manufactured goods in the world. This is done by 7% of the world's people living on 6% of the land's area. This makes many nations of the world almost entirely dependent on us when it comes to the types of production that they are not set up to do at the present time. This means that through the release of agricultural labor, we have been able to go into these enterprises and hundreds of others like them to the end that the per capita wealth is staggering in this country as compared to the average country of the world. But those countries are learning now of our wealth and wondering how people who live in the United States can have this sort of thing.

This progress is so astounding and yet it is so common that we sort of accept it and the children who are born into this age see nothing remarkable about this at all. How did America with 6% of the world's land area and 7% of the world's population achieve this high rank among nations? We are one of the youngest of the nations--less than 200 years of age--compared to many nations with thousands of years of national history. How could we alone develop our resources to such an extent? Other countries have resources comparable to ours, but they are simply unable to develop a system that will provide food for themselves. Why has China in 4,000 years of known history not been able to develop an economy which would support even 1/10 the standard of living as enjoyed by the average person in the United States?

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While we have been making these wonderful strides, something has been happening to the group left on the farm. One hundred years ago there was 72% of our population on the farm; today, there is less than 12%. Unless we can get a better understanding than we have at present, unless we can improve our public relations in agriculture, the gap will increase between those who are the customers of agriculture and those who are the producers of the products to be sold. Personally, I do not want to see anything but a competitive attitude and a competitive practice in America; this has been at the bottom of the progress that we have made. It has built up an increasing efficiency. We should not destroy this system, but at the same time the consumer and the producer are on opposite sides of the fence and this is good because it brings about this competition. However, we need a better educational program on the part of our agricultural leaders to show our consumers--the 88%--that the farmers need their understanding. This program of educating the consumer group ought to be the No. 1 challenge to the American agricultural leaders. It can be done only through organizations of one type or another--farm organizations, community, area, state organizations, etc.

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In America we have reached a height never attained by any other nation in this regard. We produce about 1/3 of the world's steel, 1/2 of the world's coal, 1/2 of the world's crude oil, 40% of the world's milk; we own about 90% of the world's bathtubs, 48% of the world's radios, 58% of the world's railroads, 60% of the world's telephones, 80% of the world's automobiles and trucks, 90% of the

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While we have been making these wonderful strides, something has been happening to the group left on the farm. One hundred years ago there was 72% of our population on the farm; today, there is less than 12%. Unless we can get a better understanding than we have at present, unless we can improve our public relations in agriculture, the gap will increase between those who are the customers of agriculture and those who are the producers of the products to be sold. Personally, I do not want to see anything but a competitive attitude and a competitive practice in America; this has been at the bottom of the progress that we have made. It has built up an increasing efficiency. We should not destroy this system, but at the same time the consumer and the producer are on opposite sides of the fence and this is good because it brings about this competition. However, we need a better educational program on the part of our agricultural leaders to show our consumers--the 88%--that the farmers need their understanding. This program of educating the consumer group ought to be the No. 1 challenge to the American agricultural leaders. It can be done only through organizations of one type or another--farm organizations, community, area, state organizations, etc.

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Just in the last 25 years or so, we have begun to look upon this desire of people to live together and to work together as a device for getting things done and very roughly we talk about "community development." I do not know of a definition of community development, but it seems to me that we know what we are talking about--as a logical group of people learning to work together with the resources that they have and the resources they can obtain in order to reach the desires that they have for physical improvement, spiritual and mental development and opportunities, etc.

In urban centers this sort of thing has been going on probably with a less definition than in the rural areas; and suddenly we find ourselves in all of the states interested in community development. We know without too much research that this is a tool which is not equaled in many respects for obtaining more universal adoption of certain techniques than any other that we've ever developed. To us in Agricultural Extension work, this is very desirable because we have always known that there was a certain segment of the population that we never were able to reach. We sense in this community development program another tool to reach more people.

In the struggle to accomplish something there comes about a certain amount of unselfish service that would not be found otherwise; and so in community development this, if it is properly and skillfully handled, can be used as a most powerful tool to secure the cooperation and the efforts of even the last family in the community. And we as educators and as leaders--leaders on every level, in the neighborhood, in the community, or in the county, area or state--must learn more about the real things that motivate people to work, that motivate people to desire progress, that motivate people to do the things that they, after they learn are possible to do, really want to do. What a challenge this is to you and to me to see that every person in the community has an opportunity to develop his or her leadership traits so that every person is a leader to some extent in different fields in different ways. Whenever you influence a person to do anything, you are leading that person and you are a leader; and everybody to some degree influences somebody else.

You people here represent a dedicated group who have come many miles; many of you are private citizens, not paid public employees, sacrificing your own time and energy and money to come to learn more about a method of enabling people to better their own lives. I know of no more unselfish thing than this. I know of nothing that could be considered more valuable than this. I believe that we are unselfish in trying to see that the lot of all the people down to the very last person in our community is improved by our efforts. I am sure that each of you as you go about these tasks, whether voluntarily taken up by you or whether assigned to you by an organization, has within you this desire to help someone, and this is the thing that motivates us. And in community development, and here in North Carolina what we call our area development program, each of us has an opportunity to express ourselves to the fullest. There is none among us that is too humble and too ignorant but that he can make some contribution to this program.

Here in this great Southland which has a large proportion of the disadvantaged people of the country, the opportunity is probably greater than anywhere else in the world--or certainly anywhere else in America. We who are serving as leaders will not meet the challenge unless we learn all we can about the various devices and tools of this great new method that we are trying to put into effect. We are hoping that through the Southeastern Community Development Association, the meetings you have had in the past, the meetings you are having here this week, and the meetings that will be held year after year will enable all of us to meet this challenge and to do a better job.

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