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MOVING FORWARD WITH TITLE VI AND THE RURAL DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1972:

THE ROLE OF SMALL PRIVATE COLLEGES

Remarks by Dr. Edward L. Henry, President, Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana to the Des Moines Conference on Rural Development sponsored by the Land Grant Colleges of the United States, and the U. S. Congress: November 26, 1973

For several years prior to taking my present position, I directed an interdisciplinary research-community service Center at Saint John's University, Collegeville, Minnesota. Saint John's is a private college of 1500 men located in Minnesota's largest rural county.

This Center for the Study of Local Government began as the first, or at least one of the first, small city study centers in the nation in 1967. It soon expanded its aims to the study of non-metropolitan social institutions including rural criminal justice systems. Besides research and community education it acted as a catalyst and intervenor in trying to overcome cultural lag and obsolescence in such institutions. The Center did not focus on farm problems as such.

While we got some in-kind assistance from the College, the bulk of our basic sustaining financial support---well over one million dollars---came from foundations and state agencies. When I left the Center in 1972 we had a full time staff of sixteen people, about two-thirds of them professional and para professional, one-third secretarial and clerical. In addition, we had some student and part time professorial assistance. I always felt that the Center, itself, was an experiment to determine whether a relatively small college could launch and sustain a fairly significant research and social service thrust (contrary to conventional wisdom).

Besides our own efforts we early tried to stimulate somewhat similar efforts in some other outstate colleges. To this end we utilized some of our funds to encourage such efforts; for instance, a \$10,000 grant to the state's second largest public institution. We also financed some modest team research with professors in other colleges. In trying to develop research linkages between some of the outstate colleges, we completed an inventory of research skills in the outstate colleges, and then helped to establish an informal association of research people among them.

Our Center activities would fall under three headings:

- 1) Research: a) that initiated by ourselves and funded by agencies and foundations.  
b) that conceptualized by others and contracted to us
- 2) Administrative services as a contractee or staff arm of state agencies or regional bodies: such as a coordinator for a state-wide drug and alcoholic addiction educational program: or as the administrative staff arm of the 15 county Region "D" Crime Commission of Minnesota. The latter including writing or helping to write projects for LEAA funding for local government units plus follow-through for funding.



- 3) Action and Educational programs including a training program for small city planning commissions; a delivery system for communicating our research findings from a study of twelve micro cities in Minnesota; a project to coordinate community resources in twenty-five Minnesota cities in a drive to abate potential juvenile delinquency; and a citizen and power structure survey in those Minnesota cities to determine community priorities and help planners work towards them.

I don't want to bore you with a description of our projects. A list is appended to my printed remarks.

Rural Development is something quite different from the historic and well done mission of agricultural extension in delivering technical information and know-how to farmers. We are playing a new ball game in a new kind of countryside. For one thing we are dealing with a countryside in which non-farmers predominate. Their problems are largely not the historic problems of the farmers. Secondly, we are partially trying to change social concepts rather than certain technical skills. This is a far more volatile subject area. Thirdly, key elements in the development of rural areas are the urban settlements---the urban service and job creation centers, whose health is crucial to farmers and non-farmers alike. Thus development personnel have to become knowledgeable if not expert about the problems of small cities. Finally, there is the matter of adjusting institutional and staff behavior patterns to these new demands---a not inconsiderable problem given the tendency to settle into behavioral channels supported by clientele interests as well as by traditional value structures, attitudes, and procedures.

There is a good deal of obsolescence in rural social institutions as there is in the rest of society. Rural sociologists have been fond of reminding us that non-metropolitan America, for reasons we need not go into now, is a more stable (some say static) kind of social situation than the large metropolitan areas. Higher educational institutions, from one point of view, are supposed to be instruments of social change. If the stock-in-trade of colleges is ideas, we might heed Alexis DeTochqueville's seasoned observation that society responds to new ideas by threatening to subject the thinker to the despotism of custom. How does an institution unleash new ideas about obsolescent social institutions, such as local government structure and jurisdiction, without arousing the enmity of the community? Will a countryside dweller respond the same way to a proposal for inter-county consolidation or a COG unit or land use planning as he would to new information about crop rotation, new septic tank systems or erosion control techniques? Yet, one of the most important requirements of revitalizing the countryside lies in overcoming obsolescence and cultural lag in social institutions that have become irresponsive or inadequate to a new set of problems.

At our Center we were conscious of the volatility of the subject matter with which we were dealing---obsolescent rural criminal justice systems, or outmoded forms of county government. Communicating with laymen across the moat is often a difficult process for educators. Consequently, we sought to staff our Center with a judicious mix of academics, former office holders like myself, and ex-candidates for political office. We assumed that the practitioners had had to grapple with real problems, understood many of the practical ramifications and pitfalls of community action, and had linkages or at least "status" with community laymen



whose cooperation and support was vital if we were to succeed. At one time we had an ex-mayor, a rural legislator, a reformed alcoholic, a former county attorney, and two disappointed congressional candidates working on projects. Even so we found lingering suspicions that were tolerable only because the state agencies at the Capitol and the state university in some respects had some worse problems to relate to than ourselves. There is one advantage to being a less visible and more familiar part of the local landscape!

In developing projects we followed a strategy of "community partnership", letting research subjects and educational endeavors flow naturally out of community leaders. Brain-storming sessions with them frequently uncovered what they conceived to be problems. Further dialogue often refined the nature of the problem to a point where the academics could state it in more sophisticated and researchable form.

Small colleges have a potential of quick decision-making. They are maneuverable; and the private ones are, perhaps, less subject to the myriad restrictions of laws, administrative regulations, accounting and auditing practices and sensitivity to jurisdictional turf that sometimes exhaust and discourage creativity elsewhere. On the other hand, this type of institution constantly has to face the impression of funding agencies that they are inept in research and community service.

If the Center at Saint John's University had some modest success, it was due to our ability to establish some rapport with laymen practitioners in the communities with which we dealt. It was also perhaps due to our late entry into this field, our naivete, and our lack of previous commitments.

Rural development, as suggested obliquely in Title V, calls for more than technical assistance. No institution of higher education, large or small, public or private, has a monopoly of ideas or talent on the whole range of subjects that "development" encompasses. One of the pitfalls lies in assuming that the countryside and the clientele is the same as it was a decade ago. Another is that like the social institutions they study, colleges and universities as well as mature government agencies are themselves vulnerable to myths, clientele pressures, tunnel vision, and bureaucratic survival interests. One check and balance against such hazards is the introduction into the problem solving process, in this case rural development policies, of a variety of institutions to assure a diversity of approaches. Perhaps this is what Congress had in mind under Section 504 (c) of the Act in soliciting the engagement of a variety of educational institutions in the programs.

Addendum:

A Chronological History of  
the Center's Development



## A Chronological History of the Center's Development

The original purpose of the initial Ford Foundation grant was to provide the impetus for a research and service Center, attached to a rurally situated University, that would service the needs of local decision makers. Since that early inception, the Center has involved faculty and students and has created a nuclear, multi-disciplinary full time staff to speak to a wide range of non-metropolitan issues through applied research and education. The following is a chronological list of research and educational efforts that the Center has carried out since its inception in 1968.

### Establishment of the Center for the Study of Local Government (January 1, 1968 - June 30, 1970)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Ford Foundation

With its initial funding in January of 1968, the Center launched a comparative study of twelve, outstate communities ranging in size from 10,000 to 50,000 in population (micro-cities) to provide perspective to community leaders on their own cities.

The small city study grant in 1968 has been responsible for creating a unique college-based research and community service center. The Center's uniqueness stems from the fact that it is private college based, located in the countryside, and addresses research and education skills to non-metropolitan issues and needs. Micropolis in Transition, a case study of a Micro-City was also produced as a result of this effort and has received wide circulation.

### Aeronautics Study

(Summer, 1968)

Contractor or Source of Funds: State Department of Aeronautics through the Minnesota State Planning Agency

This study was conducted at the request and with the assistance of the Minnesota Department of Aeronautics. Congruent with the Center's commitment to the examination of the needs and issues relevant to small cities, this research project was designed to determine the usage of the airport in the micro-city. Six Minnesota micro-cities were selected as sample areas to examine the relationship between the airport and the economic base of the city.



Study of Regional and Intergovernmental Relations in Minnesota  
(September 1, 1968 - December 31, 1968)  
Contractor or Source of Funds: Minnesota State Planning Agency

Conducted by Center staff at the request of the Minnesota State Planning Agency, this study explored the following types of questions regarding regional and intergovernmental relations in Minnesota:

(1) What is the legal basis for regional planning and other types of governmental cooperation in Minnesota and what improvements, if any, might be made to stimulate such cooperation? (2) What is being done in other states in this respect? (3) What experiments are on-going in Minnesota right now? (4) What is the extent and nature of relations between local, general purpose units of government in this State? (5) Is there enough hard evidence to warrant a judgement on the effectiveness of such cooperation and joint action as now exists? (6) What devices designed to stimulate and support cooperation might be recommended?

Region "D" Administration and Planning  
(July 1, 1969 - Present)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Minnesota Governor's Crime Commission

Region "D", encompassing fifteen non-metropolitan Minnesota counties, is one of seven criminal justice planning Regions established in the State. Since initial funding in 1969, this project has continued to receive funding from the Minnesota Governor's Commission on Crime Prevention and Control. Center staff involved in this program are concerned with the formulation and administration of action programs within the designated 15-county area. Through this program, assistance is offered to regional agencies in preparing and submitting proposals for state and federal grants. This work is carried out in cooperation with the Region "D" criminal justice advisory council, which is composed of representatives from each of the fifteen counties.

Community Analysis Forums  
(March 1, 1970 - February 28, 1971)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Title I

These forums, an experiment in devising a delivery system for the micro-city data to community leaders, were completed in twelve cities. The forums were private and public dialogues with community leaders and interested citizens over the comparative ratings of their community as against eleven other similar sized cities on selected indicators of community progress. A publication listing the comparisons was published and made available to each city and a follow-up evaluation in three sample communities was conducted by Center staff.



Sertoma Project -- Mental Retardation Survey  
(Fall, 1971)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Sertoma Club

At the request of the members of a local Sertoma Club, Center staff conducted a survey regarding issues inherent in the field of mental retardation. The study was carried out in order to determine the needs in the mental retardation field in a five county area in order to provide this citizen group with program priorities.

Drug Abuse Prevention Services  
(February 1, 1972 - June 30, 1972)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Minnesota State Planning Agency and  
Minnesota Governor's Crime Commission

The Region "D" Drug Awareness Clearinghouse is one of six non-metropolitan regions providing drug awareness information and services. The Clearinghouse began operation February 1, 1972, under the auspices of the Drug Abuse Section of the State Planning Agency. The Clearinghouse quickly became active supplying drug related information, providing seminars and workshops to small towns and community organizations. Currently Clearinghouse staff are designing innovative community forum interventions through use of NIMH produced social seminar films, simulations and role playing. Question and answer columns are provided for small town newspapers as a community education device.

Impact of Future Electric Power Requirements in Minnesota  
(October 1, 1970 - January 15, 1970)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Minnesota State Planning Agency

Prepared by the Center for the Study of Local Government at the request of the Minnesota State Planning Agency, this report raises pertinent issues associated with the electrical power requirements of the State of Minnesota. The report is designed to encourage the public and elected officials of the State to take a comprehensive and long-range view of the ever increasing electric power problem.

Model Instructional Program for Local Officials  
(April 1, 1972 - June 30, 1973)

Contractor or Source of Funds: Title I

Building upon the history of the Local Government division of the Center, the Model Instructional Program for Local Officials (MIPLO) is a project intended to develop innovative training for local planning officials. The project was funded by Title I of the Higher Education Coordinating Committee. It is a one year project, although continuation funds for one year are anticipated.