



## CHAPTER 11

*Community interdependence; school,  
church, and medical needs and  
adjustments; taxes; zoning;  
local government.*

# Adjustments in Community Facilities Taking Place and Needed

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THE COMMUNITY in which the farm family dwells is undergoing changes which are as basic, as involved, and in some ways as rapid as the changes in production and marketing of food and fiber. The role of the farmer in the community and his relationships with the nonfarm members are in transition. Some of the community services which are important for the welfare of the farmer and his family are also rapidly changing. Other service organizations are being forced — sometimes reluctantly — to consider the adjustments which will be required for survival together with reasonable quality of service, economy of cost, or efficiency of operation.

Some of these changes within the community are caused in part by adjustments under way in farming. For example, the trend toward larger-scale farm units requiring a smaller labor force may not only cut down the total number of farm people in the community but reduce the number per square mile. This may handicap schools, churches, and local government by reducing the volume of business and increasing per capita costs. In one such New York community, a rural mail carrier reported losing an average of a family a year for the 20 years he had been on the route.

Other changes in the community reflect impersonal forces of society for change. For example, in another small rural service center long favored by its location on one of the principal highways, construction of a parallel thruway some miles distant resulted in a precipitous drop in volume of business for several services as traffic was diverted to the new route.

The establishment of an industrial plant in a southern rural community in 1951 gave direct employment by 1957 to about 500 persons and clearly gave an economic boost to the area as well as to the employees. Yet both plant management and local leaders indicated a strained relationship between community and plant. Changing standards in the larger society as to what constitutes an adequate school plant and curriculum have an effect at the local community level. Changing patterns in the use of time and changing values with respect to leisure create a demand for new recreational services in the community or result in some families leaving the home community.

Still other changes within the community flow from the impersonal but real forces which result from the changing internal character of the community, as when farmers become both factory workers and "moonlight" farmers or when urban-working commuters take up residence in the rural community and become the new majority or articulate innovators.

The effects of this wide range of forces for change vary widely from community to community, depending on location, size, competitive position, resources, and action taken by local people to make the necessary adjustments. Nor are the effects of the forces for change necessarily the same for each type of facility or organized social system within each community.

## THE COMMUNITY

### An Over-All Trend to Community Interdependence

Historically, in much of the rural United States, people first grouped themselves on a locality basis into what came to be called neighborhoods.<sup>1</sup> This form of social grouping in the open country, around the crossroads, and around hamlet centers was the locale for much of the social life and was typically the location of essential services such as the general store, blacksmith shop, elementary school, and church.

Then villages and small towns sprang up, often at the crossroads of transport and communication. These became centers for the more specialized services. For several reasons most centers incorporated as municipalities and cut themselves off as legal governmental units distinct from the surrounding countryside and from the people served who lived in the country.

By the period of World War I, a town-country community, sometimes referred to as "rurban," emerged in rural America, and neighborhoods began to weaken. This new pattern typically had no legal basis or governmental recognition; it was, however, a social reality. It was the result of the impersonal social forces at work — automobiles, improved roads, use by country people of the services offered in the village and town center, and the need for a larger population base to support such services as education for which standards of rural people were rising. Quite typically

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<sup>1</sup> A summary of changing community patterns is given in John H. Kolb, *Emerging Rural Communities*, Univ. of Wis. Press, Madison, 1959, pp. 3-11.

this emerging town-country rural community was then conceived of as comparatively self-sufficient in providing the essential economic, educational, health, religious, communication, and other services required.

There is now growing recognition that the concept of easily identifiable, highly self-sufficient communities providing nearly all the services and opportunities needed does not fit the facts of the changing rural scene. Rather, as Kolb points out for Wisconsin and as is supported by New York and other research, "multiple community patterns are the most recent to emerge."<sup>2</sup> These are the result of an over-all trend to mutual interdependence among locality groups with different functions localized among different centers and with farm families typically using a number of centers for services.

For example, church and elementary school services and convenience goods may be obtained at one center; high school, banking, and doctor services may be at a second center; general hospital services and dress-up clothing are at a third; and specialized medical and hospital services may be at still another center.

The centers are becoming more specialized in the services rendered and functions performed, just as farmers are specializing in their enterprises. Thus a network of interrelated communities is developing with supporting services; this trend is likely to continue, leaving patterns in flux for some time to come.

The image which rural people themselves currently have of their community varies greatly. Some persist in thinking primarily in terms of the limited geographic and social area described more technically by "neighborhood." Some seem to be social isolates with no real sense of group ties. Perhaps for the majority, some version of the town-country community represents their "real" community — sometimes along with a neighborhood identification. Other parts of the complex of functionally interdependent places — in the concept of the majority — are nothing more

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<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

than locations in which to obtain selected services. Still others, although physically resident in the town-country community, identify themselves little with it but are cosmopolitan in their range of contacts.

In the over-all view, change and diversity characterize the contemporary community situation of the rural United States. Research in New York, Wisconsin, Mississippi, and elsewhere has shown that "community" and "neighborhood" persist in significance in the daily lives of a great many farm and other rural people, although the ties that bind are more voluntary and more psychological in nature than in the past.

In the multiple patterns emerging, each type of social and economic service tends to have its own unique service area, distinct from that of all other services in the territory, and over-all there is little similarity between the areas served by the various community facilities and the areas encompassed by governmental units.

The over-all trend for the important organized social systems which serve rural people in the community is toward bigger units of operation and administration. The pressures are toward units which are considered — on the basis of experience or the judgment of "experts" — large enough to provide sufficient "volume of business" to permit the desired quality and type of service or to operate more efficiently or economically.

The one-teacher school, the one-doctor community, the country church served on a part-time basis, the administration of public assistance on a township basis are all giving way.

The trend results in new services, better quality services, or services which could not otherwise be afforded. One cost is that, in general, services are becoming more removed — in miles — from the farm population. Other costs include the tendency to more impersonal social relationships and the increased difficulty for the typical citizen to participate, or participate wisely, in decision-making on public problems.

### Three Types of Communities in Relation to Adjustment

Awareness of the "population explosion" might lead some to conclude that all communities must be growing. On the other hand, the well-known decline in farm population reviewed in Chapter 10 and the continued surplus of farm youth might suggest that all communities including substantial numbers of farm people must be declining. Neither extreme represents the facts.

In relation to adjustment, one can classify the communities which provide the services for farm people as (1) expanding, (2) stable, or (3) declining. The relative number of each of the three types clearly varies widely by regions and among states. However, precise measurement on a community area basis is limited. The best available indicator is the population changes in community centers. Our data — until the results of the 1960 Census of Population are available — are limited to incorporated centers as reported in the 1950 and earlier censuses.

Take Iowa, for instance, a state where two-thirds of the counties lost population between 1940 and 1950 and where farm population declined 21.6 percent in the same period. In that decade, the majority of all centers of 5,000 population or over in 1940 were classified as "expanding" by 1950, on the basis of having had an annual rate of growth of 10 percent or more (Table 11.1). The majority of all centers between 500 and 5,000 population were "stable," neither growing as much as 10 percent a year nor losing that much annually. While almost half of the centers of under 500 were stable, 31 percent were "declining," as they had suffered a loss of 10 percent or more per year. Above 5,000 population, no center was declining, but below this the smaller the population, the larger the percentage of centers classified as declining.

In North Dakota, which lost 22.3 percent of the farm population between 1940 and 1950 and lost 3.5 percent of the total population, the general trend for the larger centers to gain and the smaller to lose also held. The details differ, however, because a decided majority of all

TABLE 11.1

INCORPORATED CENTERS IN IOWA CLASSIFIED BY SIZE IN 1940 AND BY GROWTH 1940-50

Size of center	1940	1940-50		
	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Percent expanding*</i>	<i>Percent stable†</i>	<i>Percent declining‡</i>
Less than 500.....	503	21	48	31
500-999.....	210	19	60	21
1,000-1,749.....	94	20	66	14
1,750-2,499.....	33	18	76	6
2,500-4,999.....	45	36	60	4
5,000-9,999.....	22	55	45	0
10,000-24,999.....	10	30	70	0
25,000-49,999.....	6	50	50	0
50,000 and over.....	5	80	20	0

\* "Expanding" defined as population increase of 10 percent or more 1940-50.

† "Stable" defined as increase or decrease of less than 10 percent 1940-50.

‡ "Declining" defined as decrease of 10 percent or more 1940-50.

Source: Data based on U.S. Census of Population.

North Dakota centers of over 1,000 population were in the expanding category, a bare majority in the 500-999 size group were stable, and 43 percent of those under 500 were declining. No place of over 1,000 was declining.

Washington, although incurring a 17.7 percent decline in the farm population, is a different story with a 37 percent gain in total population from 1940 to 1950 and a 73.1 percent increase in the rural nonfarm population. The majority of all centers over 500 in size were "expanding" during the decade; no size category had a majority of centers in the "stable" class. Although nearly half of the centers even under 500 were expanding, this size group — as in other states — had the largest percentage declining (20 percent). With one exception, declining centers were limited to those under 1,750 in population.

Mississippi's story, with virtually no change in total population but a 21.6 percent decline in farm people, is much like Washington's. The majority of all centers of over 1,000 were expanding; 37 percent of those under 500 were declining.

New York's case is distinctly different from the others cited. In this state the already relatively small farm population declined by another 19 percent but total population increased by 10 percent over the 1940-1950 period. In contrast with the other states cited, the majority of centers of less than 2,500 population in 1940 had expanded by 1950 (Table 11.2). The smaller the center, the larger the percentage classified as expanding, to the point where 66 percent of those under 500 were in the growth category. The majority of centers over 2,500 were stable, and in general the larger the center the more likely it was to be stable. The few cases of decline were principally smaller centers, as in the other states, but reached only 6 percent for centers of less than 500.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 11.2  
INCORPORATED CENTERS IN NEW YORK CLASSIFIED BY SIZE IN 1940 AND BY  
GROWTH 1940-50

Size of center	1940	1940-50		
	<i>Total number</i>	<i>Percent expanding *</i>	<i>Percent stable †</i>	<i>Percent declining ‡</i>
Less than 500.....	116	66	28	6
500-999.....	144	55	42	3
1,000-1,749.....	99	55	44	1
1,750-2,499.....	35	54	46	...
2,500-4,999.....	84	39	58	3
5,000-9,999.....	48	33	67	0
10,000-24,999.....	47	47	53	0
25,000-49,999.....	10	20	80	0
50,000 and over (except New York City).....	12	8	92	0

\* "Expanding" defined as population increase of 10 percent or more 1940-50.

† "Stable" defined as increase or decrease of less than 10 percent 1940-50.

‡ "Declining" defined as decrease of 10 percent or more 1940-50.

Source: Centers with 1940 and 1950 populations taken from W. A. Anderson, *City and Village Population in New York State, 1940 to 1950*, mimeo., October 1954.

<sup>3</sup> The ebbs and flows of population in New York towns decade by decade for a century are given in Dolores Schubert and E. A. Lutz, *Some Population Changes in New York State, 1850-1950, and Some Implications for Rural Government*, Cornell Univ. Dept. of Agr. Econ. Bul. A. E. 999, August 1955.



The relation between farm population clearly shifts, changing functions of community centers in relation to their size. Community adjustments by size of community is one which varies widely across the nation. However, growth or decline in population is not the only internal factor which produces change in communities. The communities which are stable in population may undergo changes equally as drastic as those which are expanding or declining. For example, it is difficult to see how a shift of the occupational structure within a small community can fail to bring about adjustments in the community's social structure and processes.<sup>4</sup>

### **Alternative Adjustments for the Three Types of Communities**

It is well established that as people seek to meet such basic needs as education, religion, health care, and government, they establish regular, more or less predictable behavior patterns. These established patterns are disrupted by social change, and effort is required to reestablish equilibrium or order and to reduce the period of disorganization. The adjustments to the rapid changes under way in the communities and community facilities for rural people will cost time, energy, money, leadership, and perhaps some changes in attitudes and cherished values.

The changes in the three types of communities result in somewhat different consequences. There are different alternatives in adjustments to changes.

#### **DECLINING COMMUNITIES**

One alternative for declining communities is to attempt to maintain existing services such as schools. This alternative requires higher per capita economic costs to maintain services at the existing level of quality. Without higher per capita costs, the quality of service is likely to decline.

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<sup>4</sup>This point and some of the points in the following section have been stated by George M. Beal in *Iowa's Changing Agricultural and Rural Life*, a paper presented at the Fifteenth Annual Short Course for Soil Conservation District Commissioners, Department of Economics and Sociology, Iowa State University, Ames.

Even with higher per capita costs, the comparative disadvantage of the people with respect to services may increase unless the income and wealth of the area grows to compensate for the decrease in population.

A declining community is likely to require its citizens to give more time and energy to maintaining existing services and organizations. Declining communities are likely to lose their attraction for young people and the most able. Accordingly, leadership drifts into the hands of the old or the less able, and the adjustment capacity of the community is further retarded.

A second alternative for declining communities is to abandon their efforts to maintain their independent position and to adjust to change by reorganization, combination, and consolidation with other communities in line with the trend toward a multiple-community pattern. This appears to be the way services demanded by modern society will most often be provided at a reasonable cost. Yet this alternative is not without its costs in hurt feelings — when leadership roles are lost or the status position in the official hierarchy is reduced — in lost membership, in decreased participation and involvement, and in social conflict.

#### EXPANDING COMMUNITIES

Although U.S. society believes growth is desirable, the practical consequences of rapid growth of population at the community level are all too well-known. The pressure of people on schools, churches, public health and sanitation facilities, police and fire protection, etc., is a familiar story of the past decade. So, too, is the social disorganization which frequently accompanies unanticipated and undirected growth.

The facilities and services must somehow be provided at some acceptable level of quality and bearable cost. The community must seek new balance in organizations, services, and facilities in response to the changes. The alter-

native to social disorganization in an expanding community is planning, more social direction, and more organized expansion and growth. Within this broad alternative are various combinations of public and private, official, and citizen effort. It is likely that farm and other rural people must learn to accept government controls, such as zoning, which were previously unnecessary or rejected.

#### STABLE COMMUNITIES

Although a community may be stable in terms of number of people, it is not exempt from problems of adjustment. The adjustments ahead in farm size and the farm labor force will require shifts from farm to nonfarm employment for a community to remain stable in numbers in the future. Stability of numbers may be maintained by developing or bringing in industry, serving as a bedroom area for commuting workers, developing service industries such as in recreation, etc. Each of these adjustments to maintain numbers of people and a tax base brings a stress on traditional behavior patterns in the community. Shifts occur in power positions in the community. Some organizations have difficulties in maintaining active support. New organizations arise to compete with the old for time and money, and conflicts sometimes develop.

Reorganization will be necessary for organizations with a declining or changing clientele. Expansion will be required on the part of others. Over-all, the need will be likely for more planning, and more purposive effort to meet changing situations and needs.

#### **The Challenge to Communities in the Changing Situation**

There are at least five things which are being done and which must be done for communities to keep in step with the changing times.

First is the necessity of understanding change as it affects communities. What are the trends? What are the forces for change? What are the likely consequences of

trends under way? We need to separate those changes and trends which have an impersonal inevitability from those which are to some extent controllable. It is important to distinguish those problems of adjustment which a single community has the capacity to handle from those problems where a rational solution requires joining hands with other communities.

Second, with understanding of change comes the necessity of using, improving, and developing ways by which people in communities can most effectively work together on their common problems. Here farm and nonfarm people cannot afford to go their separate ways. For the most part, there are no established patterns by which communities work systematically at community problems as a whole. This is not easy to do. There are no simple formulas or pat answers. Most typically, one group in the community has looked at only one type of problem — schools, business, health, etc. But planning boards, community councils, and similar devices are all part of the search to find the way to do this job. More ingenuity is required. We must be willing to experiment.

Third, a conscious effort must be made to preserve flexibility — the ability to adapt to change — in the various systems which operate within the community. Efforts must be made to build flexibility where it does not exist.

This is especially important in building links between the local community and larger governmental and social units, in view of the trend toward centralization. We need to know the characteristics of a system that has the greatest capacity to adapt to change.

Fourth, as we study the question of how to meet these common problems, we begin to see the need for determining and clearly recognizing the goals for ourselves, for our children, for our communities, and for our nation. This may lead us to examine more closely the values which guide us in the selection of goals, to see where the values are in agreement and where they are not. The answers at

the community level are extremely important in determining the inner strength of our national society for meeting the challenge which it faces.

The question of whether a sound citizen or a persuasive crook becomes sheriff of the county does not affect alone the effectiveness and honesty with which local affairs are conducted, it determines whether a part of our democracy is strong or weak, and many such acts make up the whole. When the humble citizen votes, or sits on a jury, or discusses affairs with his neighbor at the corner garage, he may little grasp the connection, but he is, for his fraction of the summation, determining whether the bright youngster down the street will have to die on some future battlefield, and if he does whether he will die in vain. The great measures are determining of progress, but they are founded on all the little ones, and they are responsive to the will of the people.<sup>5</sup>

Fifth, all of this points clearly to one further requirement. This is the necessity for individuals, as citizens in their community, to give more time, more thought, more energy to meeting these difficult problems which are shared in common with other citizens. Whether we like it or not, the times call for more attention to public affairs.

#### A DANGER

By 1950, nearly 60 percent of the population of the United States lived in the 168 standard metropolitan areas — counties including or dominated by a city of 50,000 or more. The national Industrial Conference Board has estimated that as of spring 1960 nearly a third of the entire population was within the boundaries of the 15 largest of these. Such trends underscore the numerical significance of the population in large centers and the problems of these centers. A consequence may be to increase the difficulty of getting serious attention given to the adjustment problems of the smaller community.

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<sup>5</sup> Vannevar Bush, *Modern Arms and Free Men*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1949, p. 97 in paper cover edition.

### **Rural Community Facilities—Some Common Denominators**

Density of population is an important factor in determining the size of operating units for schools, churches, hospitals, etc. Historically, because of the land requirements for farming and the consequent comparatively low population density of farming communities, rural areas have generally fewer pupils per school, fewer members per church, fewer beds per hospital, etc., than urban areas. This fundamental fact underlies much of the disparity in quality and specialization of services which has been traditional between rural and urban, not only in the United States but worldwide.

This inherent obstacle of low density and smaller potential "volume of business" per square mile requires people in rural areas to exert more effort and spend more money per capita to achieve parity with urban areas in quality and range of services.

There is clearly a trend toward larger and larger units of operation and administration and a widened basis of support for many of the facilities which serve rural people. With the growth of specialized services and with the enlarged population base needed to economically and efficiently support such services, these trends will continue. The impact of these trends on communities and the adjustments required will be related to the size and competitive position of a community and to whether it is expanding, stable, or declining.

### **SCHOOLS**

In one rural community after another, the public school is the largest single institutionalized facility as measured by cost of facilities and operation or by number of persons directly or indirectly involved.

### **Adjustments Under Way**

Probably the most significant trend with respect to rural elementary schools has been the consolidation of small districts into large ones for administration and tax

support. This has been accompanied by the abandonment of one-teacher schools in favor of the multiple classroom unit.

The consolidation process brought open-country areas into legal cooperation with villages, towns, and even cities in the provision of facilities, especially for secondary schools. Typically, in consolidation, the open-country school buildings are abandoned and the new buildings located in a village or town center. Elementary and high school districts have been combined.

There are variations from legal consolidation with a common central administrative, support, and attendance area (at least for the high school). Some districts are voluntarily contracting with others for secondary school services or for both elementary and secondary services, thus retaining their independence for tax purposes. Consolidated districts are banding together to provide certain specialized services on a cooperative basis which separately they could not afford. Elsewhere, adoption of a county unit system of administration and support is accompanied by separate community schools. In 1955-56, a fourth of all counties, located principally in nine southern states, were on a single district basis.<sup>6</sup>

From 1942 to 1957 the number of independent public school districts was reduced 53.5 percent, from 108,579 in 1942 to 50,440 in the school year 1956-57.<sup>7</sup> Small districts decreased the fastest; large districts gained, with the breaking point between loss or gain somewhere around an enrollment of 600. Districts with fewer than 600 enrolled had about 30 percent fewer pupils in 1957 than in 1952; larger districts gained nearly 35 percent in enrollment in the same period.

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<sup>6</sup> Walter H. Gaumnitz, *Small Schools are Growing Larger: A Statistical Appraisal*, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Education, Circ. No. 601, September 1959, Table 1.

<sup>7</sup> Walter H. Gaumnitz, "Independent School Districts Decrease and Increase," *School Life*, 42(4):14-17, December 1959. In 1952 there were 2,409 "dependent" school districts operated as a part of state, county, municipal, town, or university governments while in 1957 2,467 such units were reported.

The average school district covered 42.6 square miles in 1952 and 56.2 square miles in 1957, an area increase of nearly 30 percent.<sup>8</sup> One-teacher public schools reached their numerical high in 1917-18 with 196,037; by 1957-58 they had declined to 25,783, or an 87 percent loss.<sup>9</sup> The annual rate of disappearance of one-teacher schools by decades has been as follows:

	<i>Schools Closed</i>
1917-18 to 1927-28	3,997
1927-28 to 1937-38	3,473
1937-38 to 1947-48	4,650
1947-48 to 1957-58	4,906

These reductions have taken place almost wholly in rural communities but have occurred unevenly across the nation. Fewer than 100 one-teacher schools remained in 1958 in each of 22 states; these included not only the most urbanized states but some of the most rural in the nation. Half of the remaining one-teacher schools are in the Plains states; however, in 1958, over 1,000 such schools remained in each of 11 states. The timing of consolidation and the annual rate of eliminating small schools has moved unevenly from state to state and region to region.

This continued combination of schools and the growth of enlarged attendance units has been paralleled by the growth of a large and costly school transportation system. In 1919-20 only 356,000 pupils were reported by the U.S. Office of Education as transported. By 1950-51 some 7,300,000 were transported daily in a fleet of 120,000 vehicles.<sup>10</sup>

Transportation requires a nine to ten times larger share of the total school budget in the most rural counties, on the average, than in city school systems.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Walter H. Gaumnitz, "The Exodus of the One-Teacher School," *School Life*, 42(6):13-14, February 1960.

<sup>10</sup> Reported in Lowry Nelson, *American Farm Life*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1954, p. 90.



Average salaries of rural school teachers are estimated to have increased 50 percent (in actual dollars) between 1948 and 1956. Other costs of support have also increased.

Other adjustments under way include: (1) The addition of new buildings in expanding communities and in those stable and declining communities where combinations have taken place; (2) changes in curriculum and growing interest in curriculum revision (this includes pressure on vocational agriculture in secondary schools, a growing concern with adequate college preparatory courses, and increased attention to business and nonagricultural vocational courses); and (3) shifts in the basis of support from property to other sources of revenue and from local to state and federal funds.

### **The Situation in the 1950's**

Wide diversity is characteristic of the quality of rural school facilities in the United States, reflecting the large measure of local control, along with variations in such other important aspects as local tax base, state aid, and the value systems of local people. The rural schools in the United States continue to be significant: Seventy-five percent of all schools, two-thirds of all public high schools, and about 45 percent of the children enrolled in public schools are in centers of under 2,500 people. Twenty-two percent of the total public school staff and 20 percent of the public school enrollment in 1955-56 were located in the 1,706 counties classified by the U.S. Office of Education as "rural" on the basis of 1950 census data. These same rural counties included 49 percent of all districts operating public schools and 40 percent of all school plants. They served 6.2 million children at a cost of \$1.4 billion.<sup>11</sup>

Much of the disparity between rural and urban children with respect to enrollment during the elementary and secondary school ages has disappeared. However, disparity

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<sup>11</sup> Walter H. Gaumnitz, "Some Rural School Facts," *School Life*, 42(7):32-33, March 1960.

continues, over-all, on many measures of quality of education conventionally used, such as average salaries of instructional staff and expenditures per pupil. An overriding continuing characteristic of rural schools is small enrollment. In 1957, 60 percent of all independent school districts — 30,312 in all — enrolled fewer than 50 pupils. About 90 percent have a number below the minimum which many educators are advocating for quality, diversity, and efficiency of educational services.

### **Adjustments Needed**

It is clear that there will be continuing pressures for further reorganization of school districts. The minimum enrollment size advocated by specialists in education has moved upward to about 1,200 to 1,500 pupils in grades 1-12. Many rural communities can anticipate adjustments which will be involved in further reduction of one-teacher schools, accelerated combination of already consolidated schools into larger units on a multiple community basis with one center getting the high school and the other centers retaining elementary schools, and increased cooperation among several school systems to provide more specialized and more costly services.

Typically, further reorganization will require legal units to include both town and country or rural and urban where previously the two segments went their separate ways, at least legally. In some instances, the forces set in motion by school reorganization will lead to the expansion of one of the cooperating communities and stability or decline for the other cooperators.

In expanding communities, the pressure toward large schools for the elementary grades seems to have overreached itself; therefore, more such communities are likely to have new elementary buildings decentralized throughout the district. The location of such buildings often changes neighborhood and smaller community alignments.

Curriculum evaluation needs to be accelerated. With the increased level of educational aspiration, as reflected in college enrollments, there will be need for increased standardization of college preparatory courses. An increasing number of communities will face problems of developing and supporting community or junior colleges. For the noncollege-bound youth, more communities need to consider the development of vocational high schools on a multiple-community basis. The place of extracurricular activities, especially interschool athletics, needs appraisal.

Continuing attention must be given to equality of educational opportunity within and among communities. Providing such opportunity will involve even further attention to methods of providing funds and equalizing support, in addition to requiring adjustments in strongly-held values. For some groups, such as the children of migrant farm workers, much more effective linkage will be required among several school systems which are often in different and even widely separated states.

Because of the growing costs of operating school facilities, some communities — especially declining ones — will find it desirable to control settlement to prevent the establishment of year-round residences in locations where the cost of maintaining all-weather roads and school bus transportation will be excessive.

An evaluation is required of the appropriate role of the public school in providing educational services for out-of-school adults.

In the adjustments ahead, there is danger of conflict between the demands of the larger society and the judgments of the expert, on the one hand, and the self-interest and traditional values of the local community, on the other. In arriving at wise decisions and minimizing conflicts, it will be important to examine as carefully and objectively as possible all of the consequences to various alternatives proposed.

## CHURCHES

As measured by membership, attendance, and support, more rural adults participate in some way in church affairs than in any other voluntary nonfamily, nonoccupational organized activity. Research suggests that the church continues to have a higher importance to the majority of rural people than any other formal social organization in which they participate voluntarily. There is some evidence that many rural people prefer to keep the center of their religious activities close to home, although the same people are willing to travel considerable distances for economic, educational, and medical services.

### Rural Church Adjustments Under Way

Adequate data are not available on a national or representative basis to provide even reasonably exact information about rural church adjustments currently under way. There is support, with varying degrees of reliability, for the following summary of trends:

1. Although the total number of churches in continental United States increased from an estimated 243,000 in 1940 to nearly 307,000 in 1957, the number of rural — especially of open-country churches — has been decreasing.<sup>12</sup> One source estimates the rural church decline at about 20,000 between 1930 and 1955.<sup>13</sup> Local studies, however, show diversity in even this aspect of the rural church situation. Expanding communities increase their churches; cases may be cited of new vigor coming to existing weak open-country and hamlet churches with the influx of nonfarm people. Even stable communities may increase church numbers as population shifts are paralleled by new denominational interests or as the population base

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<sup>12</sup> Benson Y. Landis, editor, *Yearbook of American Churches* (edition for 1959), National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., New York, September 1958. Number for 1940 calculated from data given Tables II and III, pp. 294-95. Same source shows nearly 286,000 churches in 1950. Data for 1957 given page 267.

<sup>13</sup> Everett M. Rogers, *Social Change in Rural Society*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1960, p. 213.

permits a new church to become established for those who formerly had to travel some distance to attend a church of their faith.

2. Where rural church decreases have occurred, it appears that most typically the open-country church has been closed and some form of merger with a village-centered church has taken place. In this process, some discontinue church attendance; the general effect is for a larger percentage of town and village church membership to come from the open country.

3. It appears that there are more farm people with church affiliations than at any time in the past.<sup>14</sup> All evidence shows a higher percentage of total population was enrolled as church members during the 1950's than at any time previously.<sup>15</sup> There is some support for the belief that farm people are sharing in this trend.

4. The average number of members per church has clearly been increasing for all religious bodies as a whole in the United States. The average has moved from 265 in 1940 to 339 in 1957.<sup>16</sup> Presumably churches in rural areas have in general shared to some extent in this trend.

5. Nationally, the dollar value of new construction of religious buildings more than doubled between 1950 and 1957, going from a reported \$409 million to \$868 million.<sup>17</sup> Expanding communities have undoubtedly been most affected by new construction.

6. Along with a limited amount of church reorganization of the type represented by merger, federation, and the larger parish, there has been considerable development of interdenominational cooperation of the type represented by local, county, and state councils of churches.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Nelson, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>15</sup> Landis, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 300.

<sup>18</sup> A study in 1950 found 503 federated churches in the United States. See Landis, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-225 for list of state and local councils with paid and unpaid staff.

Thus, churches show some evidence of the same trends which characterize school systems.

### The Current Rural Church Situation

As with rural schools, a prevailing general characteristic of the rural church is the small membership when compared with the average city church. In Indiana, the average rural church membership was 127 in 1955.<sup>19</sup> A five-county sample of rural churches in Montana in 1958 averaged 103 members.<sup>20</sup> One of the most careful studies of the rural church has been made in Missouri, where average membership of churches was as follows by location:<sup>21</sup>

Open-country	92
Small villages (200 to 999)	142
Large villages (1000 to 2499)	238
Small cities (2500 to 4999)	376

Where some form of reorganization and combination has not taken place, the church remains where other services have been abandoned. In Covington County, Mississippi as late as 1941 there was a church building for each 182 persons 10 years of age and over. Here, where 58 of the 76 churches were in the open country, there was a rural church to every seven square miles.<sup>22</sup> In 1958 an Ohio county had 26 rural churches of the same denomination. Only three had more than 100 members and five of the churches were in a seven mile square area.<sup>23</sup>

It is clear that the rural church situation cannot be accurately portrayed without distinguishing between sect-

<sup>19</sup> Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Lawrence M. Hepple, *The Church in Rural Missouri: Part V. Rural-Urban Churches Compared*, Missouri Agr. Exp. Sta. Bul. 633E, July 1959. Churches listed here were classified by administrative organization.

<sup>22</sup> Harold Hoffsommer and Herbert Pryor, *Neighborhoods and Communities in Covington County, Mississippi*, USDA, BAE, Washington, D.C., July 1941.

<sup>23</sup> Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

and church-type religious organization and distinguishing among denominations. Sects are sometimes referred to as "Pentecostal" or "fundamentalist" churches. Size of sect-type groups is not strongly related to the size of center in which located; they are always small. Certain denominations tend to maintain rural churches at a size level comparatively large and in line with their small city churches.

In comparing the rural with other churches on such measures as full- or part-time ministers, training of ministers, amount of group activity, frequency of Sunday worship services, budgets, etc., it becomes essential to distinguish sect- and church-type organizations. In the Missouri study, 27 percent of the open-country church groups were sect-type as compared with 18 percent in small villages, 38 percent in large villages and 36 percent in small cities. The religious values of sects and the basis of organization call for different measures of quality and efficiency of religious facilities than are usually applied to church-type organizations.

The Missouri study makes clear that for the church-type organization, size of the group is the factor highly associated with many measures of church activity. Therefore, the disadvantaged position of rural churches on many of the measures is believed to flow from the size factor rather than simply from the location factor.

Although considerable stress is placed by rural church leadership on the community role of the church, a Wisconsin study concluded that rural churches serve to integrate groups or classes.<sup>24</sup> In Wisconsin, no general movement similar to school reorganization is evident for churches. Rather, in situations studied there was evidence of "overlapping church areas, of religious contacts crisscrossing community boundaries, and of some neighborhood churches operating with little regard to those of like

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<sup>24</sup> Louis Bultena, "Rural Churches and Community Integration," *Rural Sociology*, 9:257-64, September 1944.

<sup>25</sup> Kolb, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

interests in nearby villages and towns.”<sup>25</sup> The conclusion was drawn that “organized religious interests were being directed toward churches rather than toward communities.”

### **Rural Church Adjustments Needed**

Rural churches as a whole in the next decade will face the same general type of adjustments as other facilities such as schools. The nature of the adjustments will be related to the type of community — expanding, stable, or declining. Even open-country churches will increasingly face the problem of accommodating to a more heterogeneous clientele with a smaller proportion directly engaged in farming.

The adjustments made will be related to whether the individual congregation is a church- or sect-type organization. The church-type organizations, especially for the denominations not having what specialists consider to be a reasonable size, will be under increasing pressure to reorganize in some way to provide higher quality and higher cost services. For some time, Protestant groups have advocated one organized church per 1,000 of the population. Some church leaders have adopted a minimum standard of about 300 members per church with one full-time minister.

In the Missouri study, recognizing that the optimum might vary from one religious body to another and with population density, it was assumed that a full-time clergyman could minister to the religious needs of 400 persons in the rural areas. The great majority of Missouri churches studied had fewer than 100 members, indicating the tremendous amount of adjustment involved if standards were to be met.

With increasing heterogeneity of population and with the changes in social and economic structure which will continue to take place as farm people adjust to change and as new people move in, communities may find sects becoming established where they did not previously exist.



## MEDICAL SERVICES

Analysis of the medical services situation from the standpoint of farm and other rural people is complicated by two factors: (1) the absence of adequate statistical information regarding facilities and trends in rural areas on a national or reasonably representative basis, and (2) the changing patterns in the use of medical facilities by rural people so that data on resources located within rural communities or counties gives an incomplete picture of the actual availability and use of resources. With these limitations in mind, the following general trends may be indicated.

### Adjustments Under Way in Medical Facilities

1. With the changing nature of the practice of medicine, hospital facilities have increasing importance in providing high quality medical service. Availability of good hospital facilities influences the decisions of private physicians as to where they locate. Patients develop more favorable attitudes toward the use of hospitals.

In 1946, after careful studies indicating great deficiencies in hospital facilities throughout the nation but especially in rural and low-income areas, Congress passed the Hill-Burton Hospital Construction Act. This provided for federal assistance for a systematic nationwide hospital building program channeled through states to cooperate with local public and private sponsors. In 1954 the Act was broadened to provide assistance for the construction of diagnostic or treatment centers, nursing homes, and rehabilitation facilities.

The 3,514 projects approved for construction by June 1957 were designed to add 152,593 beds — mostly in general hospitals — and 824 facilities for out-patient care — chiefly public health centers.<sup>26</sup> The significance of this program for rural areas is indicated by the fact that, of 1,111 new general hospitals approved by 1957, 564 were

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<sup>26</sup> U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, *Annual Report, 1957*, Washington, D.C., p. 123.

in communities having no hospital before the program started. In addition, inadequate facilities were supplemented; obsolete facilities were replaced. Over half (53 percent) of all facilities approved are located in communities of less than 5,000 population and only 13 percent in cities of more than 50,000.

Statewide planning, taking into account priority needs among communities in relation to recognized standards, was a keystone of the method used in providing the federal assistance. Federal funds amounted to about one-third of the total cost and improved the distribution of general hospitals serving rural people.<sup>27</sup> However, in some areas, there were declines in locally available hospital beds in relation to population.

A basic objective in state plans has been to establish coordinated hospital systems on a regional basis so that the small, most isolated rural health centers and hospitals would be effectively linked with larger hospitals providing specialized facilities and personnel.<sup>28</sup> Important gains have been made toward this objective.

Hospitals and other facilities built under this program have required community action. Consequently, many areas have organized on a community, multi-community, county, or regional basis to obtain the desired facilities.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of the aggressive action taken to meet needs, the number of beds in general and special hospitals (excluding mental) has kept pace with population growth for the nation as a whole.<sup>30</sup> In total, accessibility to hospital

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<sup>27</sup> Leslie Morgan Abbe and Anna Mae Baney, *The Nation's Health Facilities: Ten Years of the Hill-Burton Hospital and Medical Facilities Program, 1946-1956*, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Public Health Service Pub. No. 616, Washington, D.C., 1958, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup> V. M. Hoge, "Hospitals and Public Health Centers," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 273:34-42, January 1951.

<sup>29</sup> For illustration of community action to provide hospital facilities, see Elsie S. Manny and Charles E. Rogers, *Hospitals for Rural People*, USDA Farmers' Bul. No. 2110, 1957.

<sup>30</sup> *Health, Education, and Welfare Trends*, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., 1960 edition, p. 51.

service for farm people increased during the 1950's and the quality of accessible service improved.

2. A second major development with respect to health services for farm people involves the financial support of services received. By 1947 the federal voluntary insurance program developed in 1936 primarily for low-income farm families was curtailed. At the peak, this program had about 620,000 farm people in 1,100 counties enrolled in locally organized and controlled prepayment plans which provided for physicians' care, hospitalization, drugs, and dental care.<sup>31</sup>

Among farm people, voluntary cooperative prepayment plans on a local basis under nongovernmental auspices began to develop on a scattered basis as early as 1929. During the fifties, farm people joined others increasingly in the voluntary health insurance available through non-profit agencies such as Blue Cross and Blue Shield, through insurance companies, and through plans developed by industry and by consumer cooperatives. By 1955, slightly more than half of the farm families in the United States had one or more members covered by some health insurance.<sup>32</sup> Benefits most often apply to hospitalization, but applied to surgical care for 43 percent of the farm families in the 1955 study and to other health care for 36 percent. The percentage covered is much higher in some areas.

In many instances the prepaid plans for farm families have involved local Granges, Farm Bureaus, Home Bureaus, and dairy and other cooperatives. In some rural areas it has been found that the community can be used as the group for enrolling members in voluntary health insurance.<sup>33</sup> For one-fifth of the enrolled farm families, the

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<sup>31</sup> Milton I. Roemer, "Rural Programs of Medical Care," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 273:160-68, January 1951.

<sup>32</sup> Donald G. Hay, *Enrollment in Voluntary Health Insurance in Rural Areas*, USDA, Agr. Info. Bul. No. 188, April 1958.

<sup>33</sup> Donald G. Hay and Selz C. Mayo, "Extending Voluntary Health Insurance Through Community Organization," *Public Health Reports*, 71(5):477-80, May 1956.

health insurance policy was connected with the off-farm employment of a family member. The Veterans Administration program of medical care has relieved some of the pressure on local community medical facilities.

3. It is likely that an increasing proportion of farm and other rural people have been reached by public health programs, principally of a preventive and diagnostic nature, conducted through organized local health departments and through the schools. Between 1947 and 1957, 400 additional counties were included within full-time local (usually county) health departments.<sup>34</sup> Between 1948 and 1956 there was a net increase of over 500 in the number of public health centers in the United States, three-fifths of them in the southeastern states. However, a national study concludes that there has been no growth in local health department services since 1950 when inflation and population increase are considered.<sup>35</sup> Studies in New York counties have shown a shift in use of county health department services toward problems such as environmental sanitation.

4. A trend is the development, again typically on a county basis, of publicly supported mental health clinics and of voluntary associations to carry on mental health education. Of all residential and major occupational groups, it appears farm families are least apt to use professional aid when mental health problems are felt to exist. Nevertheless, farm families are increasingly having the opportunity to use mental health facilities.

5. With the growing dependence of the practicing physician on the resources of the hospital, the clinic, and the laboratory, and with the growing specialization of medical practice, small and declining communities have had difficulty in replacing and holding general practitioners. It appears that the turnover rate of young doctors who establish a practice in rural areas is high. Even in states

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<sup>34</sup> Barker S. Sanders, "Local Health Departments, Growth or Illusion?" *Public Health Reports*, 74(1):13-20, January 1959.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

such as New York which have a physician-population ratio rating as the most favorable, the ratios in nonmetropolitan counties are below the level considered as desirable. Some nonmetropolitan counties studied over an eight-year period have improved their position with respect to specialists but have slipped backward or not improved with respect to general physicians.

6. The concern for medical and auxiliary personnel, especially in rural areas, has resulted in a wide variety of efforts to meet these needs. These include governmentally supported efforts to train more personnel, professional association efforts to recruit and place personnel, community efforts to provide facilities which would attract doctors, and other activities and programs.

### **The Current Situation for Medical and Health Resources**

On a nationwide basis, rural farm people are not using physicians or dentists as much as rural nonfarm and urban people.<sup>36</sup> Neither are they generally making as much use of preventive services or of prepayment plans. However, farmers were buying twice as much medical care in 1955 as in 1941, allowing for changes in the price level.<sup>37</sup> Despite the gains, rural areas as a whole continue to be less favored in available resources. The services most readily available are likely to be characterized by smallness of size, as in the case of hospitals, or by less specialization, as in the case of doctors.

### **Adjustments Needed in Medical and Health Services for Rural Areas**

Further reorganization of medical and health care facilities will be needed if farm people in many communities

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<sup>36</sup> *Health, Education, and Welfare Trends*, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, D.C., 1960, p. 40.

<sup>37</sup> Jean L. Pennock, "Changes in Family Spending — Medical Care," *Farm Family Spending in the United States*, USDA, Agr. Info. Bul. No. 192, June 1958, pp. 23-28. See also Alvin L. Bertrand and Donald G. Hay, *Farmers' Expenditures for Health Care in 1955*, USDA, Agr. Info. Bul. No. 191, June 1958.

are to have adequate private and public health services. Expansion of coordinated hospital service plans on a large area basis will be required. Communities and counties will find it necessary to cooperate in providing funds to pay for facilities and personnel. In the process, many small and declining communities will have to give up having a resident doctor. Other communities will find it necessary to give up their small hospital.

In the adjustments ahead, still further experimentation can be expected as to forms of organization which will provide low population density areas with the quality of medical service desired; an expansion of some system of private group practice seems likely.

The changing nature of illness, in which communicable disease problems have been replaced by problems of chronic illness, aging, and mental health, will affect medical and health care facilities needed. For example, there will be a growing need for nursing homes.

Specialized services will be required to deal with growing and emerging public health problems — sanitation, water and air pollution, and radiation.

## **OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Schools, churches, and medical facilities are used here to illustrate trends under way and adjustments needed with respect to community services important for farm people, but they are only a part of the package of publicly and privately supported services which make up the levels and standards of living of today's farmers. A few of the other services can be mentioned only briefly.

## **Provisions for Security and Welfare**

Since the mid-thirties, government, especially state and federal government, has assumed a role in the provisions of security and welfare services in great contrast with the past. Farm people have gradually and increasingly shared in the benefits of these services. In fact, it has been public policy at the national level that federal funds for some

of the services would go to predominantly rural states to establish, extend, and strengthen the services.

Coverage of hired farm workers under the old age and survivors insurance provisions of the Social Security Act was initiated in 1950. Farm operators in 1954 became the last major occupational group to be offered coverage.<sup>38</sup> The direct effect of this national program will be to make public assistance costs of local welfare agencies lower than they would be otherwise. Indirect effects on the community have yet to be adequately assessed.

Under the Social Security Act of 1935, and subsequent amendments, the federal government makes grants-in-aid to the states for what are known as categorical forms of assistance — aid (including medical) to the aged, aid to dependent children, aid to the blind, and aid to the permanently and totally disabled. Only what is known as "general assistance" (poor relief) is excluded from federal financial support or other participation. One condition of the federal grants to the states is an approved state plan which must provide, among other things, for supervision by the state of local agencies upon which state rules, regulations, and standards are mandatory.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, differences among and within states persist with respect to the programs of public assistance. The states are free to decide on the kinds of local units which shall administer these programs, so that in excess of 10,000 local units administer public social welfare.<sup>40</sup> Basically, the new programs have been carried on through the traditional units of government, although with a strengthening of the county. In the future, these units face the same adjustment problems of finding an optimum size from the standpoint of quality of service and economy of cost per capita as do services such as schools and public health.

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<sup>38</sup> "Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance: Development of Agricultural Coverage," *Social Security Bul.*, 21(6):3-6, June 1958.

<sup>39</sup> *Characteristics of State Public Assistance Plans Under the Social Security Act*, Public Assistance Report No. 27, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, 1956.

<sup>40</sup> Wayne Vasey, *Government and Social Welfare*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1958, p. 434.

The Social Security Act of 1935 provided funds for child welfare services to be used in predominantly rural and other areas of special need. Similarly, grants-in-aid to states for services to crippled children were authorized. Federal funds for these services have expanded greatly. The number of children receiving child welfare casework services increased consistently in rural states reporting between 1946 and 1957. In contrast to trends in the urban and semi-rural states, the rates of children served in relation to total children increased.<sup>41</sup>

Family counseling services through voluntary family service agencies employing professionally trained casework personnel are available almost exclusively in urban areas.<sup>42</sup> A population base of about 50,000 is considered necessary to support an agency of even minimum size. A small but growing number of farm families use the services of such agencies for help on crucial problems of family life. The experience with the intensive approach to farm and home management in at least some areas brought to the foreground the importance of such professional counseling resources. In more instances than anticipated, solution to the management problems of the farm hinged upon a successful resolution of problems of interpersonal relationships within the farm family.

### Recreational Services

Adults in small village- or town-centered communities not uncommonly place recreation — especially for youth — at or near the top of their list of current community problems. An adequate census of trends in recreational facilities, indoor and outdoor, for individuals and groups of all ages, is lacking for rural communities. Casual observation indicates the growth of facilities, both publicly

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<sup>41</sup> Helen R. Jeter and Henry C. Lagewski, *Children Served by Public Child Welfare Programs: 1957 with Trend Data 1946-1957*, Children's Bureau Statistical Series No. 45, U.S. Dept. of Health, Education and Welfare, 1958.

<sup>42</sup> A description of these services and the distribution of the 284 member agencies of the Family Service Association of America is given in *Family Service Highlights*, Vol. 20, No. 5, May-June 1959.



and privately supported, in many rural communities, parallel to that for the large centers in many respects — supervised summer playgrounds, ball leagues for different age groups of boys, bowling, etc.

As measured by expenditures, the interest of farm families in recreation is growing, and at a faster rate than for nonfarm families. Average expenditures in 1955 for a selected list of recreational goods and services were twice that in 1941 (in comparable dollars) and the spread between farm and urban families was narrowed.<sup>43</sup> Undoubtedly some of the increased expenditures involved use of facilities outside the home community. The ability of communities to provide or maintain recreational facilities will be linked, as for other services, to population trends and to the wealth and tax base. In some states, such as New York, state funds are available to communities on a matching basis for recreational programs just as for many other services.

Farmers and rural communities in the future are likely to be increasingly affected by the demand for outdoor recreational facilities on the part of the nonfarm population, especially the metropolitan population.<sup>44</sup> In some communities this could mean the conversion of substantial areas to parks, forests, and wildlife areas. A pattern is beginning to develop in which farmers and other private landowners cooperate with a public agency to provide hunting and fishing to nonfarm sportsmen. Farm families are finding that one way to increase income is to provide a farm living experience for city residents.

### **Other Community Services in Process of Change**

Federal grants-in-aid to states on a matching basis for rural libraries were initiated for a five-year period in

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<sup>43</sup> Emma G. Holmes, "Changes in Family Spending — Recreation and Reading, Transportation, and Education," *Farm Family Spending in the United States*, USDA, Agr. Info. Bul. No. 192, June 1958, pp. 28-33.

<sup>44</sup> Marion Clawson, "The Crisis in Outdoor Recreation," *American Forests*, Vol. 65, Nos. 3 and 4, March-April 1959.

1956. By January 1, 1960 over 1200 rural counties were reported as receiving new or improved services; 65 of these had no previous library service.<sup>45</sup> Some states are devising state aid formulas which provide powerful incentive for the development of county or multi-county library systems.

In 1949 Congress authorized the Rural Electrification Administration to improve and expand telephone service in rural areas, through local cooperatives. In 1950 only 38 percent of farm households had telephones. In contrast to more adequate telephone service, public transportation has become less available in smaller communities as rail passenger and freight service and even bus service have been curtailed. The consequence is that rural families without private transportation are more isolated physically than they have been for several decades. This situation is most likely to exist in small, declining communities away from the main traffic thoroughfares.

Farm and other voluntary organizations provide community services and facilities. As one example, the Grange in cooperation with the Sears-Roebuck Foundation has conducted a community service program for the past decade through subordinate Granges. Several studies documented the great increase in organized groups in rural areas and the tendency to become more specialized, more dependent on professional and paid leadership, and to affiliate together on a county or larger area basis.<sup>46</sup> The growth of organized interest groups raises questions about the comparative importance of community vs. special in-

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<sup>45</sup> Wyllis E. Wright (ed.), *American Library and Book Trade Annual*, 1960, sponsored by Councils of National Library Association and Library Journal, R. R. Bowker Co., New York, 1960, p. 71.

<sup>46</sup> In Wisconsin, for example, organized groups were estimated to have increased by as much as 60 percent for the 15-year period ending in 1950; see Kolb, *op. cit.*, p. 143. New York studies in rural communities over a 10-year period ending in 1957-58 documented an increase both in the number of organizations within communities and in the level of participation in such groups.

terest groups for rural people. The question is more properly one of the interrelationship between the two types of groups.

## **TAXATION**

Taxes have been going up. The rise is predominantly a reflection of the demands upon government to do things requiring public funds. The demands in turn reflect the growing interdependence of individuals, families, and communities. Publicly financed welfare and medical care, social security, roads, schools, fire protection, farm programs, and so on would have been inconceivable on the present-day scale a half-century or century ago in a society where individuals, families, and rural communities were much more nearly self-sufficient and self-reliant.

We consider community taxation as including that by state and local governments because financial interrelationships between them are close, varied, and growing, arising in part from the legal status of local units as creations of their respective state laws and constitutions. Nor can we wholly ignore federal taxes. They are levied on the same public. Growing amounts are spent for federal grants to state and local governments, or for purposes which relieve these governments of financial responsibilities they otherwise would carry. Thus federally-financed social security to some degree lightens the load on state and local welfare operations.

## **Adjustments Under Way**

State and local taxes grew from about \$10.5 billion in 1945 to about \$30.3 billion in 1957. In the latter year non-tax revenues from fees, charges, federal aid, and the like totaled an additional \$15.4 billion.<sup>47</sup> In recent years, tax increases have substantially exceeded those of the earlier

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<sup>47</sup> E. A. Lutz, *Local and State Financing in the United States and New York State*, Cornell Dept. of Agr. Econ., A. E. Ext. 51, 1960.

postwar period. State and local taxes rose from 4.9 percent of the gross national product in 1945 to 7.0 percent in 1957. This is greater than the 1929 ratio of 6.2 percent, and less than the 1940 figure of 8.7 percent. Taxes have not been enough to meet capital construction and other financial needs. State and local net long-term debt rose from about \$14 billion in 1945 to \$47 billion in 1957.

Local and state taxes have been rising in a postwar situation where the federal government continued to require heavy tax revenues largely — but by no means exclusively — for national security and related operations. Federal taxes in 1957 were over two and a half times the combined state and local taxes in contrast to the period between world wars when state and local collections typically exceeded the federal taxes, usually by a wide margin.

Realistic appraisals of the 1960's foresee continuing increases in amounts of state and local taxes collected, barring a major national catastrophe such as war. The largest local and state expenditures by far are for education, accounting for almost 30 percent (\$14.1 billion) of 1957 expenditures. Next largest are for roads and streets, 16.5 percent (\$7.8 billion) of the 1957 total. Other financially significant functions include aid to the needy or welfare, hospital and other medical and health care (physical and mental), water supply, sewage disposal, policing, fire protection, etc.

In any of these functions one can see the probability of larger expenditures because of such factors as: (1) growing population and increasing density of settlement and urbanization in some areas; (2) rising standards of living with consequent demand for improved governmental as well as private services; (3) continuing technological development with its many-sided impact upon community facilities; (4) the growing necessity for a more highly trained labor force and better educated and more discerning citizenry; and (5) the necessity for improved facilities supported by community government.

While continued tax growth appears probable, the rate of growth is less certain. Analysts have estimated state-local expenditure increases at rates ranging from somewhat less than anticipated rates of increase in the gross national product to substantially more. As production — and incomes — expand, we could meet taxes needed for expenditures out of some of the additional income, while at the same time the ratio of taxes to income could remain steady or even continue to increase moderately. We implicitly assume here that taxes, whatever their kind, are met largely from incomes, personal or corporate.

These estimates of state and local tax growth anticipate actions to be taken by approximately 100,000 local and state governments in the United States. As in the past, tax changes will differ greatly among communities. They will depend upon political, economic, and social circumstances, and the governmental services expected of the particular state and local governments.

During the 25 years between 1932 and 1957, state and local taxes per capita rose most sharply in states of the Southeast extending on west to New Mexico. They rose least in the Northeast, in most Great Lakes states, and in scattered states elsewhere. The pattern of gains in personal incomes per capita is approximately similar, implying a relationship between economic growth and tax growth.

Among communities within states, local tax increases in recent years appear to be least in city centers, greatest in the expanding suburbs, and somewhere between in other areas. In relatively sparsely settled and declining rural areas, taxes per capita are often high even though government services are modest, as a result of dividing governmental costs for such things as schools and roads among comparatively few people.

Extreme variations among local tax rates arise from many causes, some clear and others obscure. Taxes on farm real estate per \$100 of full value averaged \$2.22 in Maine in 1959; at the other extreme, they averaged 31 cents in

New Mexico.<sup>48</sup> The same taxes as a ratio of net farm income ranged from an average of 23 percent in Massachusetts to 2 percent in Alabama. School tax rates in 1957–58 ranged among New York school districts from \$35.58 per \$1,000 of full value of taxable real property to \$2.92 per \$1,000, while the median rate was \$13.90.<sup>49</sup>

Among factors contributing to these variations are: (1) the kinds and quality of public services financed; (2) the share of services financed through local taxes generally and the property tax in particular; (3) the share of financing assumed by state or federal governments; (4) the share financed through fees, charges, and other income; (5) the density or sparsity of population settlement; (6) the economic resources reflected in the local tax base per capita or per unit of service; (7) the volume of operations of the government performing local services; (8) efficiency of performing services; and (9) the degree of growth or decline of the community.

Although property taxes have increased in dollar amounts over a long period (to \$12.9 billion in 1957), they have been declining in relative importance among all local, state, and federal taxes. These trends are likely to continue. Between 1927 and 1957, property taxes dropped from 77.7 percent of state and local tax revenue to 44.6 percent.<sup>50</sup> Their importance among state tax revenues shrank from 23.0 percent to 3.3 percent, and among local taxes from 97.3 percent to 86.7 percent.

The property tax has been superseded as the most important revenue producer by the individual and corporate income taxes. The latter are the mainstay of the federal revenue system, accounting for \$56.8 billion of \$77.4 billion of federal tax collections in 1957. They are also used by many state governments, comprising \$2.6 billion of

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<sup>48</sup> *Farm Real Estate Taxes*, USDA, ARS43–130, August 1960.

<sup>49</sup> New York State Education Department, Part II of the Fifty-fifth Annual Statistical Report, January 1959.

<sup>50</sup> Frederick L. Bird, *The General Property Tax Findings of the 1957 Census of Governments*, Public Administrative Service, Chicago, 1960, p. 5.

\$16.3 billion of 1957 state tax collections. Some local governments, principally urban communities, also use a uniform rather than graduated, low-rate "earned income" or "payroll" tax.

General sales and gross receipts taxes have been adopted by many state or local governments, or by both in a few states. Selective sales taxes, such as on motor fuel, alcoholic beverages, and tobacco, raise important amounts of revenue, as do the social security payroll taxes, accruing primarily to federal and state treasuries including federal and state trust funds.

The mainstay of federal finance is the income tax, while most local governments rely heavily or exclusively upon the property tax. State taxes are typically more diversified in kind, as states have turned to new revenues to relieve or supplement their onetime considerable dependence on the property tax.

As the property tax has declined in relative importance, federal taxes, primarily on income, have assumed dominance, and state taxes have risen faster than local. These trends are an outgrowth of federal and state assumption of political, administrative, and financial responsibility for doing more things relative to local governments. They have been paralleled by growth of federal aid to states, and by state aid to local governments.

The growth of capital requirements for farming and the changing relative importance of different kinds of taxes affect individual farmers differently according to the tax structure to which they are subject in a state and community. The proportion of farm capital tied up in real estate has declined while that in equipment, livestock, and other personal property has increased.

In states and localities where personal property is legally or practically exempt from the property tax, the relative property tax burden on the farm business — as a proportion of business income or labor income or capital invested — may be declining. The farmers who are more prosperous

may find their tax contribution consisting largely of income (and other) taxes to federal and state governments.

On the other hand, in states and communities where personal property is rigorously included under the property tax — where the property tax raises most local revenues and where local revenues are a high proportion of the local and state total — farmers with low incomes may find their increasing capital requirements subject to a relatively high property tax burden.

### **Adjustments Needed**

Among adjustments related to taxation that appear needed in most rural communities are the following:

1. Recognition that in the intricate web of services performed “beyond the line fence” and required by the growing interdependence of individuals, families, and communities, there must be included some functions that government can perform better than any practical combination of private interests.

2. Realization that these services cost money and that the money for the most part must come from taxes or from other publicly levied charges.

3. Willingness to see the need for and to support thorough and comprehensive studies of local and state systems of taxes and services. Such studies should result in defining more clearly the adjustments necessary to adopt taxes to the requirements of a “good” tax system under changing economic and social circumstances.

4. Recognition that failure to exercise governmental power available locally is more likely to result in “home ruin” than “home rule.” This is one thing that communities can do something about while realizing that other more impersonal factors have also contributed toward the movement of power, responsibility, and taxes to state and federal governments.

5. Closer local and state attention to an equitable and practical definition of taxable property, and to improvement



of property appraisals or assessments and property tax administration generally.

6. Consideration and action looking toward state grants of power to local governments to levy taxes other than on property. Such taxes must be equitable, of course, and capable of efficient local use or of local levy with state administration of collections.

7. Recognition that, for a number of reasons, sharing federal and state collected taxes through grants-in-aid to local governments is often a defensible alternative to complete local financing on the one hand, or to state or federal assumption of complete responsibility on the other.

8. Greater willingness to initiate or assent to local governmental consolidation and cooperation in the interest of tax equity, effective administration, and political responsiveness. This is particularly important in school consolidation partly because local governments predominate in administering and financing elementary and secondary education, and this function is typically the most expensive by far of local government operations.

9. In sparsely settled areas, a willingness to consider ways of limiting residence or public services in remote locations which require excessive costs per capita for performing functions such as school transportation and road maintenance.

## **ZONING<sup>51</sup>**

With the development of roads and automotive transport, communication facilities, and electric power, the city in a sense has moved to the onetime country. The countryside is being exploited for a growing variety of uses beyond the traditional farming-forestry-fishing. Between 1940 and 1958, while the continental United States (excluding

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<sup>51</sup> We have borrowed generously in this section from Erling D. Solberg of Farm Economics Research Division, Agricultural Research Service, USDA, particularly his *Talks on Rural Zoning*, USDA, January 1960, and *The How and Why of Rural Zoning*, USDA Agr. Info. Bul. No. 196, December 1958.

Alaska) gained 41 million people and farm population declined by almost 10 million, the rural nonfarm people increased by 27 million — more than the 24 million of urban gain.<sup>52</sup>

In many central cities the resident population is numerically stable or declining while the suburban periphery bulges farther and farther out, pushing fingers along highway arteries, or leapfrogging past more or less open country to form urban-oriented pockets or more scattered roadside centers.

The developments are not limited to subdivisions with neat ranch-type houses but include a great variety: (1) residential construction from the most expensive to the cheapest and most nondescript; (2) trailer parks and isolated trailers; (3) industries — light and heavy, sound and fly-by-night, obnoxious and desirable; (4) roadhouses and ginmills; (5) junk yards and auto wrecking lots; (6) car sales agencies and shopping centers; and (7) drive-in theaters and golf driving ranges. Nor are developments limited to an hour's drive from city employment. The remotest wooded lake shore or mountain ski slope may be crowded with "recreationists" in their season. Summer homes and cottages extend the range of seasonal urban settlement miles beyond the year-round commuting distance.

The multiplication of rural land use possibilities has led to farmer and general interest in zoning what were once rural areas. People hope to facilitate by public control more orderly and better planned community development. Private exploitation of land use free of public control brought farmers three groups of problems:

1. Excessive taxes resulting from a shifting to farm taxpayers of development and service costs such as for new schools, public water supply, sewage disposal, and the like.

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<sup>52</sup> See Erling D. Solberg, *Talks on Rural Zoning*, p. 85.

2. Adverse effects of nonfarm land uses on farm operations, including diversion of some of the best farm land to other uses, lowering the water table, and trespass hazards to crops and livestock.

3. Objections of nearby nonfarm people to some farming activities and practices such as spraying and dusting, manuring, and keeping farm animals and poultry with consequent obnoxious smells, noises, and flies.<sup>53</sup>

Local governments enact and enforce zoning ordinances under a grant of the police power of the state government — the power to protect the public health, safety, and welfare. As of 1952, incorporated population centers — cities, towns, and villages — in all but five states had the power to zone; all counties in 16 states and certain ones in 15 others had this power; towns or townships in 12 north-eastern and Lake states could zone; and six states had granted this authority to various miscellaneous units. Ten states had withheld zoning authority outside of incorporated places.<sup>54</sup> Probably only a small minority of nonurban local governments possessing power to zone have exercised it.

Zoning preceded and accompanied by intelligent, comprehensive community planning is one way to help achieve the following objectives, depending among other things upon purposes set forth in state enabling legislation by which zoning regulations must be guided:<sup>55</sup>

1. Preserving the best farm lands for agricultural use by protection from urban encroachment.

2. Fostering orderly development of lands best suited to residential, industrial, and other uses.

3. Protecting lands submarginal for farming, for forestry, recreation, and other purposes.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89–91.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup> See Solberg, *The How and Why of Rural Zoning*, pp. 3–4.

4. Facilitating adequate and economical provision of water, sewerage, schools, parks, and other public services in areas best suited to intensive development.

5. Preserving opportunities for industry and commerce dependent upon farming, in part by conserving farm land use.

6. Preserving expensive public highways from roadside encroachment, and protecting their traffic-carrying capacity.

7. Preventing residential developments that shortly create sanitation problems as a result of inadequate water supply and waste disposal.

8. Reducing wasteful public expenditure resulting from excessive road mileage.

California has apparently gone farther than other states in devising and using zoning legislation to restrict good farm land to farm and related uses. Under the zoning laws of Wisconsin, some counties have restricted use of cutover timber lands, submarginal for farming purposes, to forestry, recreation, and related uses.

Community adjustments needed in relation to zoning include:

1. Recognition that public regulation of this sort can be a positive benefit in long range conservation and enhancement of property values, and the community economic base. The traditional rural antagonism to zoning or other local regulation often reflects a cultural lag which fails to weigh adequately the degree of interdependence of people in modern rural communities.

2. Fuller realization of the impact of arterial highway and expressway construction upon rural development.

3. Greater willingness to study closely state legislation authorizing local zoning authority, and to press for objectives in legislation which fit rural needs better than laws designed primarily for urban areas.

4. Willingness to work together in larger communities and if need be to support zoning authority for political units large enough to provide zoning for the whole community.

5. Recognition that zoning regulates future development and will not correct mistakes already made. The need for zoning as one means of carrying out a community plan must be foreseen in time to prevent costly mistakes.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local governments are adapting their facilities to meet current needs, though, as is frequently the case with other community institutions, less quickly than many wish.

Local governments, as political subdivisions, are controlled by the legal framework of their respective states within the limits of the federal constitution and laws. Variety among states therefore characterizes them. For numerous reasons, including intrastate variations in local conditions of many kinds, local governments usually differ greatly within a state as well, in area, population, economic base, and governing authority.

The federal Census Bureau counted over 102,000 governments in the United States in 1957, ranging from 91 in Rhode Island to over 6,000 apiece in Nebraska, Illinois, Minnesota, and Kansas.<sup>56</sup> The Census divided them into the following types:

Counties . . . . .	3,047
Municipalities . . . . .	17,183
Townships . . . . .	17,198
Special districts . . . . .	14,405
School districts . . . . .	50,446
States . . . . .	48
United States . . . . .	1
	<hr/>
	102,328

<sup>56</sup> Governments Division, U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Governments in the United States, 1957 Census of Governments*, Vol. I, No. 1, Table 1.

County governments extend most widely over the United States and cover all but a small fraction of its area. Township (or town) governments occur largely in the Northeast, Midwest, and the northeastern edge of the Great Plains. Special taxing or improvement districts, almost half of which are for fire protection, soil conservation, or drainage purposes, appear in every state, but a few states account for most of them. The Census does not count under this type the large additional numbers of special districts which lack the semi-independent status of a local government.

School districts are by far the most numerous local units of government. They range from none in a few states (Maryland, North Carolina, Rhode Island, Virginia) where other local governments are responsible for schools (county, town or township, or municipality), to almost 5,000 in Nebraska where the small school district of tradition continues.

Local governments generally are most numerous from the Dakotas and Kansas on east through the Midwest and North Atlantic areas, primarily but not exclusively because of the school districts. In much of this region, a rural citizen lives in a minimum of three political subdivisions — the county, town or township, and school district. In addition he may be within the boundaries of a small municipality or one or more special districts. Some parts of this region are heavily populated but the association between population and numbers of local governments appears neither close nor consistent.

The kind and location of local boundaries by and large have carried over from an earlier era. The states and their people have been slow to change them. The outstanding exception is school districts which consolidation movements in some states have reduced from 109,000 in 1942 to 50,000 in 1957.

New York history may illustrate. There, school districts decreased from 6,064 to 1,664 between 1942 and 1957 with a current ultimate goal of something like 500. The last

county was added in 1898; the number of towns (townships) has altered little in a hundred years; the municipality (city and village) total has changed little in a generation; special districts have proliferated largely from suburban development outside the municipalities in the towns, primarily under town administration.

Almost half the towns in New York in 1950 had fewer people than a hundred years earlier when boundaries had become fairly well stabilized. Extremes in population and tax base have probably been growing as economic activity concentrated in industrial centers, as farm population declined, and as submarginal lands have been withdrawn from farming. The 1957 full, equalized value of taxable real property ranged among 932 towns from less than \$300,000 to almost \$2,800,000,000.

The rural counties and townships have generally shown little change in numbers or boundaries in recent decades, but this should not imply little change in government operations in rural communities. What may be occurring, as in farming and other sectors of society, is growing functional specialization and fragmentation in local government. Federal, state, and local highway men, for example (or agricultural extension men), communicate and work with each other as professional experts. Their ties are welded by close working relations among their official highway agencies. The ties are further strengthened by professional highway and engineering organizations, standards, and codes. The operational associations to a considerable degree bypass local and state political or policy control that is ostensibly exercised by representative governing bodies. We may be witnessing the disintegration of local centers of control over community government, somewhat as the onetime local chicken grower and general farmer now sees himself as part of a national broiler or layer industry with few direct ties to farmers in other specialties in his home area.

Consolidation of school districts may be taking place more than in other local governments, partly because the

former are single-function governments whose purposes are within the field of specialization and expertness of a national professional group — the educators.

Another type of change in rural local government is the development of cooperative action among these units. For example, mutual fire defense plans make possible the coordinated operation of numerous fire protection districts within an area. Local governments may share use of expensive and specialized highway equipment, or may agree to perform for each other highway maintenance operations such as snow removal. Sweeping New York legislation has made it possible for local governments to cooperate in joint operation or financing of any local functions which those governments have the power to undertake individually.

Another change which goes on as counties and townships remain stable in numbers is the consolidation of some functions in the county. These larger local governments also appear to be assuming responsibility for new activities more readily than the smaller units. For example, one county in recent years has taken over welfare activities formerly carried by the city and townships of the county; it has similarly assumed responsibility for public health. It, rather than its constituent city or townships, undertook construction and operation of a general hospital. It likewise built and operated an airport.

Among the adjustments in local government that appear needed are:

1. Recognition by those interested in community action that local government can no more afford to ignore technological advances and technical expertness with their many implications, than the farmer or rancher. Like the farmer, this probably means increasing the area or intensity of operations, or both, reducing the number of operating units, increasing capital investment in plant, equipment, and materials, and spending more money and imagination in improving personal know-how or technical and managerial



competence. The penalty of failure to act probably is that people will continue to turn elsewhere, such as to state and federal governments, for action.

2. More effective and farsighted leadership by state governments which will re-examine the pattern of local governmental units, and their organization, administration, and finance; and which will reshape the state legal framework upon which local governments depend so that people can adapt to community requirements. Depending on the state, this may mean state pressure and encouragement combined with grants of state power to localities for consolidation of local governments. More effective organization and management of locally performed functions is needed. More equitable and adequate local taxing power and tax administration combined with state support both financial and administrative would be helpful. It may mean broader grants of power encouraging and permitting local inter-governmental cooperative arrangements both for finance and administration.

3. Careful state and local weighing of the desirability of strengthening community centers of political, managerial, and financial control. The alternative of this is control of more and more highly specialized government functions on a national basis, largely by experts in the specialties.

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION FOR ADJUSTMENT

As indicated earlier, individual communities typically are not organized in a way which would permit a comprehensive appraisal of community needs and action for adjustment to the changing situation. Yet there is a tradition of voluntary action through free associations which continues to impress foreign visitors.<sup>57</sup> In this tradition, a variety of means are used to meet problems. Zoning, planning boards, and community councils are examples of

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<sup>57</sup> "Community Development in the USA," a special issue of *International Review of Community Development*, No. 4, 1959.

means being tried on a somewhat broader basis. The Rural Development program is another illustration of special relevance for rural areas.

With the accelerating rate of change and the increased importance of the forces for change which originate outside the community, increased competence in working together on common problems is imperative for people in rural communities. In continuing to provide the community facilities which farm people must have, what has been referred to as the "principle of unit requirements" provides a starting point for planning. This principle has to do with the service involved, such as pupils, together with the people, area, and money required to provide the service.<sup>58</sup> With changing standards for the services, cooperation of several communities will increasingly be required to provide the necessary population, area, and money. And "sooner or later the institution of local government is found to be fundamental to many of these intercommunity relations and necessary for their effective action."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Kolb, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-5.

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