

or Communist concepts. We take great pride, therefore, in the influence of the Grange in avoiding the extreme socialistic concept that in that period threatened the very foundations upon which American agriculture and rural society has been built.

It seems no exaggeration, even for us to say today that the so-called Granger laws charted the course and established the direction of our own American-type modified capitalism, embracing reasonable regulation under law; but resulting in a system which has afforded opportunities under a widely diverse individual enterprise structure which, in turn, has made the United States the envy of the world.

It seems appropriate to consider this chapter in American history as we come before this committee in support of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964.

Our American system has clearly been a land in which there is not only the highest per capital income in the world but we have the widest distribution of wealth because of the very wide provision for opportunities. Even though, however, most of our people today have standards of education, nutrition, health, recreation, and so forth, greater than those that could have been enjoyed by the privileged few no more than a century ago; and even though we have the highest standard of living—the greatest abundance of high-quality food, and at very low cost, the world has ever seen; and a relatively high level of prosperity and well-being for the vast majority of Americans, there are a great many people to whom opportunity has not effectively come, and for whom destitution and poverty seem inescapable from their own point of view. We shall leave the matter of urban problems to other witnesses before this committee.

Since the beginning of World War I, American farmers have not had an income level which meets the definition of "parity" or "equity" a single time except during periods when the United States was at war. Even today, the general income level of American farmers is considerably lower than that of nonrural Americans. This insufficient farmer-purchasing power, in terms of a direct relationship to the costs of production and cost of living of the American farmers, continues to be a basic cause of rural poverty. We are very grateful to this Congress and to all its Members who have intelligently come to grips with some portions of this problem. We hasten, however, to point out that more needs to be done with direct relation to farm income.

Quite beyond and in addition to the problems dealing strictly with farm income, however, we must clearly define the additional problems demanding a reasonable solution if we are to avoid seeing these rural areas become increasingly a spawning ground, not only for social and economic problems of agriculture, but also for our urban centers to which the economically depressed and dispossessed of our agricultural and rural areas have been forced to turn as they seek refuge from their unfortunate circumstances. It is no secret that much of the unrest and need in our urban centers is simply a result of our having transferred victims of rural poverty to the cities without consideration as to the skills, education, and ability to make a living in an economic and social situation that is vastly different from that which they have known most of their lives.

It seems clear to us that we have both a moral and social responsibility to consider any reasonable program that increases or improves the prospect of providing reasonable opportunity for vast numbers of these Americans—opportunities which might readily be developed under some such program as the President has obviously envisioned in his message as to a war on poverty. In fact, the grange has been concerned with this sort of community service program for many years under a nationwide effort of our subordinate granges. In the past decade and a half we have enjoyed the cooperation and financial support in this nationwide community service program as on the the great benevolent foundations which are a product of our American corporate structure; namely, the Sears, Roebuck Foundation—which program we have recently rechristened as the community progress program for service, improvement, and development in grange communities across America.

We have been much concerned with many great areas—especially those in Appalachia, as well as those in smaller concentrations in other parts of the country—where the victims do not often migrate; but where, in fact, it seems more accurate to say they tend to stagnate. Poverty, self-denial, illiteracy, hunger, poor health, early marriage, early death, and despair have become a way of life in far too many of these areas.