

It has been said that National Farmers Union in anti-CAA, but those who say this are unaware of the thousands and thousands of hours of staff time and the time which National Farmers Union has invested in trying to aid leadership in Community Action Agencies. Working cooperatively with the University of Wisconsin, we launched (with an OEO grant) the first training program for Community Action Leaders and they have spent much time and energy to see that about 80 percent of these men, who were trained actually organized CAAs or became involved in Community Action Programs. We have and are working closely with Community Action Agencies, especially in Illinois, Minnesota, South and North Dakota, Indiana, Montana, Oregon, Iowa and a number of other states. Many of our local leaders serve as members of CAA Boards.

Because of this involvement and the effort we have given to the program, we feel obligated to the Congress to be critical. The following is a statement which was discussed at length by our Policy Committee, our National Farmers Union Board, our Green Thumb Board and Advisory Committee, and by the Delegates. This position is not taken lightly and this has been done with prior discussions with a wide range of OEO officials and others involved in the War on Poverty.

"We commend our Farmers Union leadership for helping to carry out effective War on Poverty Programs in rural areas, including the Green Thumb and Neighborhood Youth Corps programs. However, most war on poverty programs of the Federal Government with few exceptions do not give equitable attention to the problem of poverty in rural areas where nearly half of the poverty exists.

"Farmers Union is deeply disappointed in the failure of the Community Action Programs to reach rural poverty with quality programs and with an equitable share of programs. Those Community Action Agencies in rural America have been inadequately supported, inadequately aided with good technical assistance and often misdirected despite the voluntary efforts of tens of thousands of persons. We call for the reorganization of Community Action Programs in rural America so that they may better serve rural areas. They have raised hopes but have failed to deliver.

"Whenever possible, beautification efforts should employ low-income persons to enable our limited government resources to do double duty. Farmers Union's experience in the Green Thumb project shows the use of low-income farmers in beautification projects as effective and desirable as a public policy. We urge the expansion of the Green Thumb and job development programs. We support the Neighborhood Youth Corps program. We support the revision of the public welfare system replacing much of public welfare with part-time and full-time community service work programs. This is a preferred way to bring low-income families out of poverty. Those remaining, who are unable to work (sick, disabled, young, and the very old), should be able to live without hardship and with dignity."

Unfortunately, we seem to act as if rural America would disappear into urban America. Since 1920, rural America has remained at about the same population level despite the vast influx into the cities. At the present rate of our migration, rural America can continue to supply the cities for many, many years and generations ahead without reducing its own total population. During this decade, rural America can supply a net surplus of 44% in population. For every 100 males who retire, die, or are disabled in the labor force in rural areas, 177 new young men will be entering the labor force. Ignoring rural poverty or supply hundreds in the form of food stamps is not the answer. We believe in the food stamp program and have done more than any one else to pass and expand this program, but it is not the solution.

Rural America has been the great generator of America, generating the talent, the brains, the leadership, the illiterates, and the poverty stricken who have moved into urban America in ever growing numbers during the past century.

For the past two thirds of this century, we have shipped people to the metropolitan areas which have become less and less attractive places to live—traffic, crime, riots, air pollution, water pollution and noise. It is no wonder most Americans would rather live in rural areas and smaller communities as shown by a variety of opinion polls. With foot-loose industries and modern communication and transportation, rural America should during the last third of the Twentieth Century move ahead to not only keep its young folks, but also attract the best of the urban population who want to escape the cities. We need to make it possible for most family farmers to continue farming and other farm youths and adults to remain in their communities. We are already creating a new way of life many rural areas, and we need to look at the best of this life and develop and encourage it. We don't have to force everyone to live in metropolitan areas surrounded by