

Too few of our rural school systems yet have the special service to help equalize opportunities for the handicapped, retarded or disadvantaged child. Only when rural schools are as attractive as urban schools can we hope to attract and keep the best of our young families.

Housing and community facilities in rural development

With nearly half of the substandard housing in rural areas, there is no doubt in our mind that we must double the efforts in rural housing areas. Almost half of the substandard housing in America is in rural areas, yet for every 25 houses built in urban America with federally aided programs only one was built in rural America.

We ask that Farmers Home Administration's farm home loan appropriations be doubled in the next two years. Congress should act to re-establish the USDA-FHA direct loan fund increasing it by \$200 million to supplement the mortgage insurance program to serve as a yardstick on the cost of such credit.

National Farmers Union urges Congress to enact a program under FHA-USDA for an experimental demonstration housing program in rural areas to see what can be done to revitalize rural housing. We commend OEO for initiating its first experimental efforts in rural housing.

Congress should provide a new program of direct loans combined with grants and restore the appropriations for a direct grant (Sec. 504) to low income families of up to \$1500 per family household to provide emergency repairs for homes that have deteriorated to the point of being undesirable for habitation. We urge Congress to amend the Housing Act to provide that only new farm homes on the immediate lot (not to exceed one acre) would be encumbered in home mortgages under the Farmers Home Administration.

We urge greater emphasis on senior citizens' housing programs in Farmers Home Administration because under current construction rates, we are losing ground in the effort to have older, low-income people live in safe, sound and adequate housing.

We support \$40 million for rent supplementation programs and that this be extended to include cooperative and non-profit rural housing for families and individuals as provided in the 1966 Housing Act, Title 5. Aid should be given to encourage more non-profit and cooperative housing in rural areas.

We urge expansion of the Aiken-Poage Water and Sewage program under FHA both in amount and to include community facilities such as police, transportation, fire facilities, street lighting facilities and community centers. Appropriate housing should be available in their own rural areas. We have lost tens of thousands of rural schools that served as community meeting halls and new community meeting room facilities will have to be developed.

We urge serious congressional consideration of all proposals for public, cooperative, and private efforts to aid self-help housing.

Health and social services

Poor health services in rural areas means poor health, more disability and more dependents. We have all recognized the lack of adequate medical services in low rural areas. The costs are staggering. On each index of health, rural people stand lower than their urban-counter part. One of the results is that rural working people have 14% more dependents than do their urban cousins who work rural areas receiving proportionally less of community health and mental health services. Part of this is our inability to attract skilled medical persons into rural areas. But much of it is because of a lack of grantsmanship both with the Federal Government and with the great charitable foundations of America, and because of the greater cost of operating health and social service programs in rural areas, because of the distances involved and our hundreds of rural farm counties which lack drugs today.

In our own Green Thumb and Community Activities for Senior Arkansans (CASA) programs, we have found an incredible lack of basic health and social services in some of our rural counties. The average older low income person interviewed by CASA was paying \$20.00 a month for drugs. We regret the House Appropriations Committee action cut out the proposed new rural health program of the public health service.

We also want to report that our experience in the Direct Drug Service shows that the further you are in some metropolitan areas, the higher the cost of drugs. This Direct Drug Service is our own private war on poverty and high drug cost.

Safety

Rural areas have a higher accident and injury rate than urban areas which is an important concern for rural development and anti-poverty efforts. The