



YOU Can Save Your Town and Community

By
Dr. John E. Thompson



Rural Area Development—sounds too much like a government bureau. No, Rural Area Development is country America's best hope for future prosperity because it puts local resources to work for the local community.

The author of this interpretive article on what our rural areas can do to help themselves is an economist in South Dakota. He heads up that state's extension activities in rural development.

In brief, according to Dr. Thompson, Rural Area Development requires a combined force of rural and city people working together to provide a future for themselves.

If you live in a small town or on a farm, in fact if you live in a city, this article is for YOU! It may help you to solve the economic problems of your community.

The production of rural opportunities in America, like the production of good crops, depends on good management.

The most successful farm operators are those who are constantly studying and using new farm management techniques and methods of increasing their profits. Likewise, our fastest growing and most prosperous rural communities, offering the greatest employment opportunities, are those where people are constantly studying and taking action on the basis of new techniques which have been tested, tried and have succeeded.

The leaders in these fast growing communities study the changing conditions in their economy which not only limit but can open up new opportunities. They are aware of the shifts in supply and demand for the kind of products currently being produced.

The markets, both domestic and foreign, are ever changing. The impact of these changes is recognized early. Above all, the most successful rural communities, like the most successful farmers, are those having people who have pre-

pared themselves to make good judgments about future conditions.

Estimates of what can be expected in the future can be improved when local people study and analyze their human and physical resources. These resources should be evaluated in relation to the changes that are taking place. This enables local people to adjust to change, to take advantage of changes and even to cause changes which can benefit the whole community. It is important to study the causes for past trends and consider to what extent these causes can be expected to continue into the future. Also, to what extent can they be altered if they are undesirable.

The demands of people need to be studied in terms of how the local community can help satisfy such demands. For example, the development of new recreational opportunities is a real potential in many areas when one considers the projections made by the Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission on *Outdoor Recreation for America*. This research organization projects almost a doubling of population by the year 2000 along with about