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Radio Broadcast - National Growth

This is Senator Hubert H. Humphrey.

In this radio report to Minnesota, I would like to share with you some of my concerns about the unplanned way our state and our nation is growing.

More than 600,000 Americans are leaving rural America every year for the large cities. And this floodtide of unplanned migration helps neither the city nor the countryside.

Their already serious problems are being critically compounded. And we read about and experience the urban housing crisis, and the transportation crisis and the health care crisis and the fiscal crisis.

City governments all across the country are on the edge of bankruptcy as they try to provide basic services for more and more citizens.

Meanwhile, what is happening in rural America?

The migration to the cities is stripping our countryside and smaller communities of their promise and their people . . . particularly their young people.

During the 1960s, our population in Minnesota increased 11 per cent, which was about the same as the growth rate for the nation as a whole. But 95 per cent of that growth occurred around the Twin Cities.

Rural Minnesota lost 150,000 people. Forty four of our counties lost population, all of them rural in character.

Why are people leaving rural Minnesota and rural America for the cities?

The answer is not complicated. They are leaving because rural areas are in decay. Because there are no jobs. Because wage rates and farm prices are depressed. Because there is little opportunity.

I believe we must take steps now to revitalize rural America and restore rural opportunity.

And we should begin by making available the capital so that rural America can begin to catch up with its needs.

I have proposed the Consolidated Farm and Rural Development Act to do just that. It would provide an overdue economic transfusion for our rural countryside.

It has two main purposes:

First, it would reorganize the Department of Agriculture to ensure a major emphasis on financing farm credit and rural development requirements.

Second, it would expand rural credit by making it available to non-farm borrowers -- businesses and small local governments -- who are unable to get credit from commercial sources.

This is a bill not only for America's farmers, but America's small towns, villages and growing communities.

It recognizes the close inter-relationship between America's farms and the community trade and cultural centers so vital to the social and economic life of our nation.

Through this program, rural America can get the necessary financing for business and industrial development . . for new jobs and new payrolls. . for better schools. . for medical centers and hospitals close to the people. . for parks and recreation areas . . improved transportation systems. . ~~improved and cultural centers~~ ~~centers~~ . for desperately needed housing.

Through this program, we can give new life to thousands of small town "Main Streets." We can build community colleges . . water and sewer systems . . police and fire stations . . libraries . . and much more.

In short, we can once again make our rural communities the vital, attractive, prosperous communities they can and should be.

I believe I know something about rural America and its problems.

My roots are in rural South Dakota. I have been in hundreds of Minnesota's small communities, talking with farmers, and small businessmen, and housewives and young people -- and I know something of their frustrations, their problems and their hopes.

I have seen what happens to people when crops are poor, when business is bad, and when hope is gone.

And I have seen what can be done when dedicated people -- with some leadership and financial muscle -- go to work. In Alma, Georgia recently, I saw what this combination of money and leadership can accomplish. ~~With other members of the subcommittee~~ I saw business and industry reviving . . progressive and exciting child development centers . . beautiful new recreations . . imaginative housing . . new jobs with good wages . . new opportunity.

That process can happen in Minnesota and all of rural America, if we make it possible -- if we provide the financial resources and if we plan for better rural and urban growth.

By so doing, we will be establishing a basic new freedom in America -- freedom of residence.

I would be interested in your views on this subject. Please address your letters to Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Room 411, Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C., 20510.



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