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RURAL RELIEF

in ILLINOIS

A Study of Home Assistance
in Thirteen Counties

By D. E. Lindstrom and
Ida D. Johns



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
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Rural Relief in Illinois

A Study of Home Assistance in Thirteen Counties

By D. E. LINDSTROM and IDA D. JOHNS¹

THE PROBLEMS of poor relief in Illinois, as in the entire country, have become especially acute in the last decade. During 1932 and 1933 and the years immediately following, when the United States was going thru one of the most severe depressions in its history, thousands of workers in the state who were capable of self-support were thrown out of employment. At an alarming rate they and their dependents were added to the numbers of the poor whose total or partial support has long been a government responsibility.

Many local communities that were already taxed to the limit to care for their poor were unable to provide the funds necessary for this additional need. It was then that the state and federal governments felt impelled to assume a large part of the burden.

In agricultural areas the problem of providing home assistance during this period of acute distress was just as perplexing as it was in crowded urban centers, altho it did not then receive, and never has received, the same amount of public notice. In cities the concentration of distress cases in small areas brings the seriousness of the situation forcibly to the attention of the public. In rural districts, where distress cases are relatively isolated and dispersed, the acuteness of the problem is not appreciated.

In this bulletin the authors have brought together facts and figures that are believed to give a picture of rural relief in Illinois as it existed from January, 1934, thru June, 1937, when both the federal and state governments were initiating relief programs on a vastly greater scale

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The authors wish to acknowledge the cooperation extended by the following agencies: the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, the Division of Old Age Assistance, the Children's Bureau of the Illinois Department of Public Welfare, the office of the state auditor, the Works Progress Administration of Illinois, the Farm Security Administration of Illinois, the Federal Farm Security Administration, county clerks' offices, and private agencies, especially the Red Cross. Acknowledgment for reading the manuscript is due: C. L. Stewart, Chief in Land Economics; B. F. Timmons, Associate Professor of Sociology; and E. E. Klein, Associate Professor of Social Administration—all of the University of Illinois. However, the conclusions and recommendations included in this study are those of the authors.

than had ever before been attempted. In order to make clear how home assistance developed in Illinois, a short outline of the legislation concerning it has been included, together with a description of the prevailing forms of administration (Part I). Existing statistics have been compiled and studied in order to arrive at some understanding of the extent and costs of relief (Part II) and of the efficiency with which funds were administered (Part III). Causes of dependency have been analyzed and the problems of relief clients considered in their relation to certain large social questions and to the agricultural conditions of the locality (Part IV).

In trying to evaluate the methods of relief administration developed during this period it has been assumed that the success of any system must be measured by the extent to which recipients are helped to become self-supporting ultimately and the hopelessly dependent are provided with a decent living. Certain changes in existing services are suggested which the authors believe are necessary if essential relief services are to be administered efficiently and economically.

Scope and Method of Study

Rural relief conditions in this study are described as they occurred in thirteen counties: Coles, DeKalb, Franklin, Mason, Mercer, Monroe, Montgomery, Pope, Scott, Whiteside, Woodford, Alexander, and Champaign. The first eleven counties were selected in a federal study¹ as a sampling of relief conditions in the eighty-eight rural counties of Illinois (Table 1). These eleven counties, scattered thruout the state, did not at the time of the study contain a town with a population over 25,000, and the families and occupations were typical of the area in which the counties were located. When the eleven counties are considered as a unit their relief loads for May and June, 1935, are seen to have been close to the state average.

Alexander² and Champaign, like the eleven counties, are representative rural counties in that neither of them contains a large town and their families and occupations are typical of the general area in which

¹Tabulations of the findings of a federal study of relief in rural and town areas were made available by the Rural Section of the Federal Works Progress Administration. All field work in the eleven counties was done under the direction of D. E. Lindstrom. Ida Johns, Robert Handschin, and L. E. Adams supervised the field work in all counties. Mrs. Olive Hastie and Goldia Martin did the early field work in Franklin, Monroe, and Pope counties; Virginia Leib, in Scott county; and Rachel Pickerel, in Woodford county.

²Lindstrom, D. E., Some factors affecting social welfare in rural areas of Alexander county, Illinois, 1934, Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. in coop. with the Ill. Emergency Relief Commission, mimeo., 1937.

they are located. Champaign county consistently had a lower percentage of population on relief than the eleven counties, while Alexander county had one of the heaviest relief loads in the state. Because these two counties represented extremes of the relief situation, particularly with reference to agricultural conditions, it seemed valuable to compare them with the average of the eleven counties.

No new field work was done for this study. The data from the federal and state studies were coordinated with the U. S. Census, with reports from various state departments, and with data accumulated at the Illinois Station.

TABLE 1.—GENERAL RELIEF LOAD IN ELEVEN RURAL COUNTIES IN ILLINOIS AND GENERAL RELIEF LOAD FOR THE STATE DURING MAY AND JUNE, 1935^a

	May, 1935		June, 1935		Total number of families (1930 U. S. Census)
	Relief cases	Relief rate ^b	Relief cases	Relief rate ^b	
		<i>perct.</i>		<i>perct.</i>	
Coles.....	2 063	20.9	2 081	21.0	9 886
Franklin.....	4 329	29.7	4 291	29.4	14 595
DeKalb.....	821	9.2	671	7.5	8 896
Mason.....	383	9.1	334	8.0	4 198
Mercer.....	500	10.8	461	10.0	4 629
Monroe.....	117	3.7	137	4.3	3 185
Montgomery.....	1 965	20.6	1 928	20.2	9 530
Scott.....	518	21.9	557	23.6	2 364
Pope.....	394	19.6	420	20.9	2 008
Whiteside.....	835	8.1	656	6.4	10 296
Woodford.....	229	4.7	152	3.1	4 883
Sample total.....	12 154	16.3	11 688	15.7	74 470
State total.....	89 531	15.3	83 826	14.3	587 082
Percent sample was of state total.....	13.6	....	13.9	....	12.7

^aThis table was prepared by the Social Research Division, Rural Section, Federal Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C. These 11 sample counties were selected from counties that had no city with a population as great as 25,000 according to the 1930 U. S. Census. ^bRelief rate was computed on basis of 1930 U. S. Census (note last column in table).

While the study covers by far the largest part of the relief assistance given in the counties, it is neither a complete description of the resources available to families in need nor a full account of the total expenditures for public and private aid. Only data on assistance given in the homes were used. No survey was made of institutional care as provided in poor farms, hospitals, and boarding homes.

The period covered by the study begins with January, 1934, and extends thru June, 1937. A few comparisons are made with the period 1930-1934. Altho the federal survey went back to 1932 in most areas, the present study does not include 1932 thru 1933 because there was difficulty in getting reliable figures for those two years.

PART I
DEVELOPMENT OF RELIEF PROGRAMS
IN RURAL COUNTIES

Laws Governing Home Assistance in Illinois

Before considering the rural relief problem for 1934-1937 it is essential to have some understanding of the history of poor relief laws and of the development of different kinds of home assistance in Illinois.

The Illinois statutes pertaining to the needy are strikingly similar to the old English law, even to wording. Our present legal conception of poor relief then goes back to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, at which time public responsibility for the poor was first recognized by law in England. This was even before legal provisions were made for public education. From English law was derived the principle of specifying residence within a township for a certain period before help could be secured. Also in the spirit of administering the old English law there was dominant a belief in "less eligibility," whereby a recipient of poor aid should receive less than the lowest paid wage earner in the community in order to discourage a demand for aid. Both the spirit of "less eligibility" and specifications for residence requirement are being used in the administration of public assistance today, even in situations that would seem to demand more modern treatment based upon careful case studies.

Altho the principles underlying poor relief in Illinois today are essentially the same as those of Elizabethan England, there have been numerous state and federal laws providing for shifts in administrative responsibility. The act of March 5, 1819,¹ provided that assistance for the poor should be dispensed thru the township by the county commissioners, who were to nominate "two substantial inhabitants" of every township to be overseers of the poor within their respective townships. These overseers were to discharge their duties "truly, faithfully, and impartially to the best of their knowledge and ability." This act further provided for "farming out" the poor to the lowest bidder. Those who were paid by the township for taking the needy into their homes had to meet certain residence requirements which were defined in detail.

The act approved February 2, 1827, repealing the act of March, 1819, provided that entire responsibility for the poor should rest with the county. The county commissioners "hereby vested with entire and exclusive superintendence of the poor" were to give relief in their respective counties to "every poor person who shall be unable to earn a livelihood in consequence of any bodily infirmity, or other unavoidable cause."²

¹Laws of Illinois, 1819, pp. 127-139.

²Illinois Revised Statutes, 1827, p. 309.

The law regarding the poor, as revised in 1839,¹ went back to the provision of the statutes of 1819. Responsibility for the poor was vested in the local justices or overseers of the poor. In counties under commission form of government the county commissioners had charge of the administration of poor relief.² The overseers of the poor were given the power to farm out the poor to "moral and discreet householders" who must "treat every poor person committed to his care with humanity, and afford him the necessary attention and comforts of life suitable to his condition. . . ."³

Altho the law of 1839 was revised again in 1845, essentially it is still in force at the present time. Therefore assistance in 1934-1937 was administered on much the same basis as under the act of 1819. A change was made in 1874 to allow townships to unite for poor relief by pooling their taxes and jointly hiring a county poor master.⁴ While the townships in a number of counties actually united, they were forced to give up the plan because the Finn Bill of 1931,⁵ supported largely by the rural areas, required that each township levy its own taxes and be responsible for the care of its own poor.

While the responsibility for administering poor relief in Illinois was specifically placed with the township as early as 1839, various state and federal laws passed since this time have taken away a part of the burden of the townships by granting special funds for certain classes of the poor. With changing economic and social conditions the tendency has been to narrow the general group designated as "paupers" and to take away the social stigma attached to them.

At first the county poorhouse or workhouse was often the only means of aiding the poor. It sheltered the old, the sick, the insane, and dependent children. Gradually it became apparent that it was unwise to include all cases in an environment such as this, where none could be handled adequately. Special arrangements were therefore made for certain classes of persons who, it was considered, had become dependent thru no fault of their own. The insane were the first group removed from the poorhouse. A law passed in 1893 provided special hospitals for them but some insane were kept in county homes even in the last decade.

The first group to be taken out of the general class of the poor and given home assistance was indigent veterans or families of deceased

¹Breckinridge, Sophonisba P., *The Illinois poor law and its administration*, p. 23, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1939.

²Illinois Revised Statutes, 1937, ch. 107, secs. 21 and 22.

³These provisions are not found in the present statutes.

⁴Illinois Revised Statutes, 1874, ch. 107. Also Breckinridge, Sophonisba P., work cited, p. 33.

⁵Laws of Illinois, 1931, pp. 725-726. This act repealed section 34, article 35, of the act of 1874.

veterans that needed assistance. The Bogardus Act of July, 1895,¹ provided "for the relief of indigent war veterans and their families." They were to be eligible for public aid without being considered as paupers. Overseers of the poor were authorized to provide the funds thought necessary.²

The blind formed a second class of poor receiving home assistance. They were specially provided for by an act of the state legislature approved May, 1903.³ According to the law, the county was to levy a tax sufficient to provide funds for a payment of a dollar a day to each recipient of a blind pension. When the payments were certified to the state auditor, the state refunded half the amount. Limits were fixed as to eligibility for benefits. Requests were made to the supervisor of the poor in the applicant's township, and the county board voted acceptance on a physician's statement as to the degree of impairment of vision.

Mothers with dependent children were taken care of by the Aid to Parents Law of 1911. The act was repealed in favor of the present mothers' pension act of June 30, 1913,⁴ whereby a third class, dependent children, were taken out of the general category. No allowance is provided for the mother herself, but when the husband is dead or physically incapacitated, the mother is granted a certain monthly sum for each child under 16 years of age. According to the provisions of the law, the counties were to take the initiative for putting the system into effect and for levying the taxes, altho a certain percentage of the payments were later to be refunded by the state.⁵ The county judge was named administrator of the law, largely because he seemed at the time to be the only person capable of administering it. The number of families actually aided by this law was relatively limited because of the requisites for citizenship and established residence within the county, age requirements for the children, and certain regulations as to property. Further help for deaf and blind children was furnished by an act in 1917 which provided that funds be allowed for educational opportunities at home as well as in special schools.

Even tho the state and federal legislation had provided home assistance

¹Laws of Illinois, 1895, p. 83. Also Breckinridge, Sophonisba P., work cited, p. 39. This act was repealed by the act approved May 25, 1907, but the principle of not treating indigent war veterans as paupers was to hold over.

²Breckinridge, Sophonisba P., work cited, p. 39.

³Illinois Revised Statutes, 1937, ch. 23, p. 295.

⁴Illinois Revised Statutes, 1937, ch. 23, p. 301. The title was amended July, 1935.

⁵The functions of the Children's Division of the State Department of Welfare, which was charged with this work, are largely fiscal and advisory. A new law was enacted in 1941 to comply with the provisions of the Federal Social Security Act of August, 1935.

for three classes of dependents, the numbers on general relief were greatly increased after 1932 because of the depression. When local agencies could no longer provide adequately for the unemployed, the federal government organized the nonpartisan Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Every effort was made to secure a trained personnel. However, the administration could not require all workers to have professional training in social work because there were not enough qualified persons available for the positions.

In the same year that the federal government was setting up the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, the state legislature established the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission¹ to administer state funds and to cooperate with the federal agency. County offices and committees were set up all over the state to help the local administrative units already in existence. However, local funds were either entirely lacking or were greatly reduced because of a decrease in tax receipts due to lowered valuations and levies and delinquent payments. At the same time the relief loads increased, and most communities could not or would not accept the responsibility of relief when federal funds were available from the State Commission. No form of compulsion could be exerted to make the townships carry more than a very small part of the load.

At the time when unemployment had caused an increased demand for aid, private agencies found their funds inadequate since voluntary contributions had been drastically cut. These private agencies for specific kinds of assistance had grown up along with agencies supported by taxation, often because the public agency did not do what seemed necessary. Private agencies were highly developed in urban centers, where they had experimented for years with methods of treatment and had formulated ideals of service. While they were also in operation in many towns, in some villages, and occasionally in the open country, they were rarely important from a financial point of view in the counties included in this survey.

Briefly these were the conditions which prevailed thruout the state when this study was begun in 1934.

The critical period 1934-1937 was to bring relatively rapid changes in relief administration. Special provisions for grants and loans to farm families were made by the creation of the Illinois Rural Rehabilitation Corporation in September, 1934. The Corporation was later superseded by the Resettlement Administration, which was in turn succeeded by the Farm Security Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in January, 1937. All operated county-wide programs thruout the state.

¹Illinois Revised Statutes, 1937, ch. 23, p. 311. Act approved Feb. 6, 1932.

By the Social Security Act of August 14, 1935, the federal government made provisions for grants-in-aid to the states that complied with requirements for old-age benefits, unemployment compensation, aid to dependent children, and public health and welfare. The part of the act establishing the federal old-age benefits program was to be administered by the federal government thru the Bureau of Old Age Insurance of the Social Security Board. All the other programs of the act were to be carried on by the cooperative action of the federal government and the various states.¹ The act of the Illinois legislature to provide allowances for the aged as passed in June, 1935, had to be amended before it met the requirements of the Social Security Act so that this program did not begin operation until early in 1936. Thus the aged formed the last class of home assistance set up in this period. Only those 65 years of age and in need were eligible and there were further requirements in regard to citizenship, residence, and possibilities of assistance from relatives.

By the fall of 1935 the Federal Works Progress Administration program was well under way, thus taking from the general category of the poor still another class—employables on relief. When the work program was set up, federal funds for direct relief were withdrawn, and the Illinois legislature passed a law requiring counties to provide poor relief effective July 1, 1935. This was done in the belief that the federal government would no longer provide funds for direct relief. The Act of July, 1935, was repealed the following year, and the townships in the eighty-five township-governed counties in the state were again required to assume responsibility.

"As of July 1, 1936, the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission was limited by law to two main functions: (1) to determine the monthly relief needs of local governmental units and certify to the State Auditor of Public Accounts the amount of state funds to be allocated monthly to those units for relief purposes; and (2) to serve, with the consent of the Governor, as an agent of the State for the receipt and disbursement of any federal funds or commodities for relief purposes, if no other agency was designated for such purpose, and to cooperate with the Federal Government in the federal projects intended to lessen the relief burden in this state."²

Since federal money for direct relief had been entirely withdrawn the state planned to supply necessary funds to all units that levied a 30-cent tax for poor relief.

The following section will describe in some detail how the various classes of the poor were taken care of during January, 1934, thru June, 1937, in thirteen rural counties in Illinois.

¹Social Security Board Pub. 27. The Social Security Act. 1937.

²Biennial Report of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, July 1, 1936, thru June 30, 1938, pp. 21-22, Chicago, Illinois, 1939. See also Illinois Revised Statutes, 1937, ch. 23, pp. 311-313.

Programs Operating During a Critical Period

In the thirteen rural counties during 1934-1937 some kind of home assistance was provided for general relief as well as for the six special classes of aid, as shown by the following list:

<i>Kind of assistance</i>	<i>Administrative agencies</i>
<i>Public aid</i>	
General relief	Township supervisors County commissioners County boards made up of township supervisors or county commissioners Illinois Emergency Relief Commission thru county units
Blind pensions	County boards
Mothers' pensions	County judges
Veterans' aid	Township supervisors and county commissioners
Work relief	Works Progress Administration
Grants to farmers	Farm Security Administration
Old-age assistance	State Department of Public Welfare through county units
<i>Private aid</i>	
Supplementary to public aid	American Red Cross ^a Church societies Salvation Army Welfare societies

(*The American Red Cross furnished major aid during the floods in Pope and Alexander counties early in 1937.)

Not all types of aid were found in all counties nor were all agencies active thruout the period. In general, however, some provision had been made for all forms of aid except for transients, who usually could get no more than a meal and a night's lodging, probably in some jail. It was evident that much of the assistance fell far short of being effective enough to put the dependent back on the road to self-support or to provide adequate living standards for those unable to work.

General relief. In all thirteen counties general relief was provided. Monroe, Pope, Alexander, and Scott counties, operating under a commission form of government, retained primary responsibility for relief with the county government during the period, just as they had always done. After July 1, 1936, each of these four counties set up a department of relief with regular paid staffs instead of leaving the investigation and handling of cases to the individual commissioners. In the nine counties with township government (Champaign, Coles, DeKalb, Franklin, Mason, Mercer, Montgomery, Whiteside, and Woodford) the responsibility for relief was shifted from the townships to the county and back to the townships during the years 1934 to 1936.¹ However, the actual handling of cases was at all times in the hands of

¹Before the Finn Bill of 1931 five of these counties, according to their reports, had used the county as the taxing base for relief.

township supervisors in all nine counties except Montgomery. Here the township supervisors set up a regular county relief department having a paid staff, which operated from July 1, 1935, up to July 1, 1936.

After the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission had been organized in 1932, applications were no longer made to local officials but to the county office of the Commission, and the regular paid staff investigated each case instead of relying only on the sworn affidavit of need. Since federal funds were being spent, the former requirement for a year's residence within a township was dropped. Most of the old distinctions as to paupers were also wiped out because of the widespread unemployment and need for relief. The Commission operated in every county in the state and carried most of the load of relief all thru the period studied.

After July, 1936, the county units of the Commission no longer operated because the state legislature returned the responsibility for relief to the townships. Even tho the state furnished some funds and the federal government had made provisions for work projects and farm grants and loans, the local units were carrying a much heavier burden after July, 1936, than they had ever done before. As a result some supervisors interviewed believed that the township should not be used as the unit for administering relief. They felt that the township supervisors were not qualified for the job and that it was a nuisance. Others pointed out that a township was too small a base for taxation, particularly when the relief load was small, and that certain townships, especially those in the open country, were favored under the system because their residents on relief, particularly the farm laborers, would go to the villages and towns for a place to live while out of work. Still other supervisors felt that the township was the best unit of administration. However, it is significant that some township officials themselves pointed to the need of larger units of administration.

The burden of general relief during 1934-1937 would have been much lighter if all veterans, blind persons, fatherless children, and other categories of the poor had been taken care of according to the provisions of the special laws which have been described. As it happened, however, there were not always sufficient funds nor adequate administrative machinery in the counties.

Veterans' aid. Only four of the counties studied gave assistance to veterans under the provisions of the Bogardus Act, and this aid was mostly in the form of medical care, veterans needing other types of assistance being referred to the regular relief office. During the year beginning June, 1935, the money for veterans' aid was raised by the townships in three of these counties and by the county in the other, but the assistance was actually administered thru the relief committees of the American Legion posts. Only two of the thirteen counties studied designated payments for veterans' aid after July 1, 1936, and

there was some question whether these payments were not given out as regular relief funds. A township or county could not legally make a special levy for veterans' relief if the 30-cent poor levy had already been made. When special funds for veterans' aid were not available, no apparent hardship occurred. Those who had been helped thru the American Legion did not seriously object to requesting general relief, thus indicating that the stigma of being a pauper was no longer particularly felt.

Blind pensions. When funds were available, blind pensions were paid in all thirteen counties. According to provisions of the law, as mentioned previously, applications to the township supervisor or county commissioner were acted upon by the entire county board after the medical examination required by law.

Inefficient management and the lack of centralized control and investigation gave rise to serious criticisms of the way blind pensions were given out in several areas. As a result of irregular payments many eligible persons had to have help from general relief funds at various times. Seven of the counties studied were able to pay blind pensions for all months during January, 1934, thru June, 1937. Three counties suspended payments during 1934 and 1935. When payments were again resumed two of the counties raised the specified allowance for three or for six months and portioned this amount thru the year. One county paid blind pensions with warrants which were later declared illegal. In 1934 and 1935 two counties were giving out pensions that had been due in 1932 and 1933.

Since no adequate survey of blind pensions has ever been made it is not known to what extent the eligible blind in the counties studied were provided for. In some cases those who had received blind pensions did not go on relief when the funds were exhausted. There was a question as to whether these persons had ever been eligible for pensions if they could with any reasonable propriety have been put off so easily.

Mothers' pensions. In Illinois, aid to mothers with dependent children was provided by county boards which raised what seemed to be the necessary levy. Altho the act establishing mothers' pensions is mandatory, one of the counties included in the study had never paid mothers' pensions and two of them did not do so in the period studied. In the entire state nine of the 102 counties did not pay allowances for dependent children in January, 1938. Even in the ten counties included in the study that paid mothers' pensions from January, 1934, thru June, 1937, it was often necessary for the mothers to apply for direct relief. Occasional payments were missed, usually at the end of the fiscal year, when funds ran low. Not only were certain payments neglected but many mothers apparently eligible by law for these benefits received no allowances at all.

In 1937 an estimated 23,000 children were qualified for aid under the law in Illinois, yet only 17,609 received aid, according to reports for the Children's Division of the Department of Public Welfare. Some counties had long waiting lists since it was thought preferable to give an adequate allowance to a few families and leave the rest to accept relief. Other counties divided the total money available among all the eligible children, and many of the mothers receiving pensions had to have additional help, thereby nullifying the intent of the law to make them independent of relief. In some counties the money collected for mothers' pensions was diverted to other uses by the action of the county board.

Altho the law required that the county judge administer mothers' pensions, the task of investigating cases was assigned to the probation officer in most of the counties. In one county this was the duty of the sheriff's office. In 1937 a demonstration was set up in Scott county by the Children's Division of the Department of Public Welfare in order to show how the funds for dependent children should be administered. A qualified social worker was put in charge. One of the first assignments of the staff was a reinvestigation of cases receiving mothers' pensions. It was found that the number of mothers paid allowances for dependent children varied greatly from area to area within the county, and many accusations were made that political pressure determined eligibility. To some it seemed that aid was given in certain cases where it was not needed.

In general, while mothers' pensions were available in most rural counties of the state, they were paid regularly in only about a third of them.

Works Progress Administration. Federal funds for direct relief were withdrawn in the summer of 1935, and in the fall of that year the program of the Works Progress Administration began to provide work for a relatively large number of persons needing help. Local relief officials were to refer certifications for employment to the federal agency, and only families eligible for direct relief were to be certified. In this way federal funds were used to provide special aid for a fourth class, the employables, instead of being spent to maintain those on direct relief.

The work program soon absorbed a large part of the relief load in all thirteen counties of the study. In these rural areas many farm people were referred to the Works Progress Administration and were given employment. However, the program never provided work for all employables. This was partly because not enough projects were available and partly because farm laborers and other workers temporarily laid off were not referred to the Works Progress Administration by local officials. As a result clients often suffered. The program was criticized by many rural people on the basis that farmers could

not pay their laborers wages high enough to compete with the pay of the Works Progress Administration. In general, however, the program did effectively relieve local units of much of the burden of relief.

Farm Security Administration.¹ In the absence of aid from other sources and because of suffering caused by such catastrophes as drouths and floods, direct grants were made to farm families as early as the summer of 1934 by the Rural Rehabilitation program of Federal Emergency Relief Administration, as already mentioned. Emphasis was placed on loaning money to farmers to keep them off relief. The primary eligibility requirements were that the applicant be a farmer, have suitable land available, and be unable to borrow at reasonable terms from any other source. Since those receiving loans were not required to be applicants for direct relief or be referred by local agencies, they are not considered as regular relief clients. Nevertheless it must be remembered that many of those who received loans were potential relief clients.² However, the federal agency made grants under the pressure of need, especially in the poorer agricultural districts, and thus it provided home assistance for a fifth class, the needy farm population who could not qualify for loans. The greatest number of grants were made in counties where farm people suffered because of drouths, poor crops, or floods. Direct grants were also made to families of needy farm tenants and laborers who did not own land and were unable to furnish the security necessary to qualify for a loan from any agency at reasonable interest rates.

In this survey the families given grants were certified as in need by local agencies and thus came within the limits of the study. Grants were made in all thirteen rural counties but the largest numbers were in Alexander and Franklin counties. However, more than five hundred grants in a county were made in Mason, Montgomery, Pope, and Scott counties. While the grant program in itself was not relatively extensive, the grants together with the loans did provide for a considerable number of farm people.

Aid to the aged. The agency to provide help for a sixth class of dependents, the aged, was set up as the Division of Old Age Assistance in the Department of Public Welfare in the spring of 1936 and was functioning in all counties by the end of that year. Applications for old-age pensions were made directly to each county office, and eligibility was determined there and approved by the Department of Public Welfare. It took some time for this program to get under way, but it

¹In this study all grants made by the Rural Rehabilitation, the Rural Resettlement, and the Farm Security Administration programs have been designated as "Farm Security Administration grants."

²Many of the 28,134 Illinois farm families that had received loans by August, 1936, were potential relief clients, according to the state office of the Farm Security Administration, Champaign, Illinois.

was functioning effectively in all thirteen rural counties at the end of the period studied.

Private assistance. Agencies of some kind supported by private funds were in existence during January, 1934, thru June, 1937, in each of the counties included in the survey, just as they had been before 1934. Their number had decreased, however, during the depression, and some of the private agencies that had been active in 1930 had discontinued service by 1934.

The Red Cross had a chapter in each county, but only two chapters gave home assistance during the period. Most of the Red Cross work in the counties studied was with transient veterans. One chapter in one of the larger towns virtually provided a case-work service. Another Red Cross unit furnished shoes for school children in a nearby area because the township supervisor did not furnish clothing. A large part of the flood relief in Pope and Alexander counties was furnished by the Red Cross in the spring of 1937.

The Salvation Army was active in six of the counties, but figures for expenditures could be used from only two counties. Much of the work was with transients, altho the Salvation Army did provide for families refused assistance by local authorities, especially nonresident families who were unable to establish residence anywhere.

Catholic societies were working in three counties but figures have been used for only one of these. Expenditures by the other societies were too small to be of any real significance in this study.

Welfare societies patterned after the ladies' aid societies of earlier years and usually an outgrowth of them were called by various names and were active in some places. In urban areas the welfare societies had developed into family welfare societies which offered case-work service, but no such development appeared to have taken place in rural areas. The rural societies usually offered supplementary assistance such as clothing and milk. Their workers generally were volunteers. Figures were used for only four of them since the others dealt in such small amounts or had such inaccurate records as to be of no value in the present study.

PART II THE RELIEF LOAD AND ITS COST

Case Loads

The average monthly case loads and expenditures were studied for the eleven rural counties included in the federal survey. Except for the first six months of 1936 the case load increased steadily from 1934 thru the first half of 1937 (Table 2). In these three and one-half years the number of cases had gone up almost 90 percent. Expenditures increased steadily in even larger proportion, the amount of money

spent for relief in the first half of 1937 having increased 174 percent over that spent in the first half of 1934 (Fig. 1). While the number of cases almost doubled, the expenditures almost tripled.

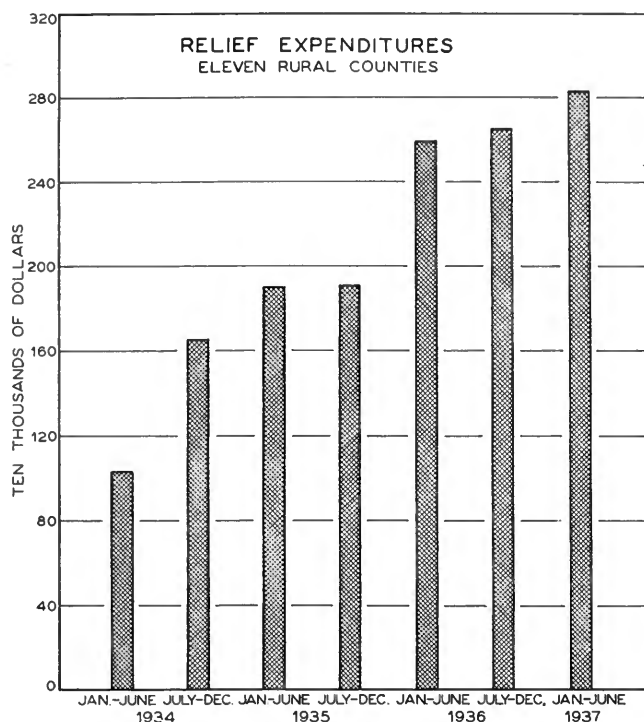


FIG. 1.—TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR ALL CATEGORIES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOME ASSISTANCE IN ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934-JUNE, 1937

Distribution of the case load. During the first six months of 1934 the eleven counties had an average total monthly load of 1,029 cases (Table 3). The number of cases increased until the average of the total monthly load was 1,954 cases during the first six months of 1937, the heaviest for the period studied. The count represents the number of cases that actually received aid from a given agency, but there undoubtedly was a high percentage of duplication among agencies. A relief case¹ might be either a family, a group of unrelated persons living in a single household, or an individual living alone that received

¹For the purposes of this study service cases and cases inactive during the month are excluded. Service cases are those that receive aid in the form of legal or other advice, consultations, and visits.

TABLE 2.—PERCENTAGE OF CASES PROVIDED FOR BY EACH KIND OF HOME ASSISTANCE: ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934-JUNE, 1937

Kind of assistance	1934		1935		1936		1937
	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half
Total general assistance	92.3	93.6	93.2	81.4	47.5	32.5	29.9
County or township relief	12.9	10.7	10.4	8.2	8.6	32.5	29.9
Illinois Emergency Relief Commission funds	79.4	82.9	82.8	73.2	39.0	.....	.....
Veterans' aid	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)	(*)
Blind pensions ^b	2.5	2.1	2.0	2.4	2.6	2.0	1.7
Mothers' pensions	3.6	3.1	3.1	2.8	3.4	2.2	2.0
Works Progress Administration wages	.....	.....	.....	11.8	42.8	32.9	24.0
Farm Security Administration grants	.....	.....	.....	(*)	1.3	(*)	3.5
Old-age assistance ^b	.....	.....	.....	.....	(*)	29.1	37.2
Private aid	1.5	1.1	1.4	1.1	1.1	(*)	1.6
Total number of cases during each six-month period	67 932	83 083	89 671	90 120	85 409	113 501	128 978

*Less than 1 percent. ^bThese are all one-person cases. Other kinds of home assistance may include some one-person cases.

any form of public or private assistance, or it might consist of one person in a family who was given a special type of aid. Blind pensions and old-age allowances were paid to single-person cases. Works Progress Administration wages and Farm Security Administration grants were paid to cases averaging about 4 persons each. General

TABLE 3.—AVERAGE NUMBER OF CASES PER COUNTY PER MONTH PROVIDED FOR BY DIFFERENT KINDS OF HOME ASSISTANCE: ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934-JUNE, 1937

Kind of assistance	1934		1935		1936		1937
	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half
Total general assistance	950	1 179	1 267	1 111	616	559	584
County or township relief	132	134	142	111	111	559	584
Illinois Emergency Relief Commission funds	818	1 045	1 125	1 000	505	.....	.....
Veterans' aid	(*)	(*)	3	3	4	1	(*)
Blind pensions ^b	25	27	27	32	35	35	34
Mothers' pensions	37	39	41	38	44	38	38
Works Progress Administration wages	.....	.....	.....	162	553	565	470
Farm Security Administration grants	.....	.....	.....	3	17	8	68
Old-age assistance ^b	.....	.....	.....	.....	10	500	728
Private aid	16	14	19	15	14	11	31
Total for all kinds of assistance	1 029	1 259	1 358	1 364	1 294	1 719	1 954

*The county average was less than one case. ^bThese are all one-person cases. Other kinds of home assistance may include some one-person cases.

relief cases averaged about 3 persons each. Obviously the number of persons receiving assistance was considerably greater than the number of cases. The number of cases, however, was larger than the number of families. A family group, for example, might have consisted of two beneficiaries of old-age assistance living with their children and grandchildren who were on relief.

In the first half of 1934 more than 92 percent of the entire load was carried by general relief funds (Table 2). General relief cases were still almost one-third of the total during the first six months of 1937, altho it was thought that the Works Progress Administration and the old-age assistance program together would reduce them to a minimum. However, the Works Progress Administration could not provide enough work to take care of all employables and only in the second half of 1936 did it provide for more families than did general relief. Moreover many cases did not fit into any category so far set up. For example, many elderly persons were not eligible for old-age assistance because they were not citizens or could not meet residence requirements. Veterans' assistance as a separate category was never set up in many counties since provisions had been made for veterans under other categories. Neither blind pensions nor mothers' allowances ever provided for a large number of cases at any one time. Altho the actual number of beneficiaries increased somewhat during this period, the percentage of cases receiving blind pensions and mothers' allowances decreased.

Only 33 percent of the recipients of old-age assistance had been on relief when the first grant was made, as has been shown by data collected in 1937.¹ Possibly many more aged persons needed help than had ever received direct relief. It would seem likely also that many of those who had hesitated to apply for direct relief did not feel that the same stigma was attached to receiving old-age assistance. The fact that 38.2 percent of the total population over 65 years of age received old-age assistance in the eleven rural counties, whereas only 17.6 percent received such aid in Cook county in January, 1937,¹ may indicate that because the Cook county personnel was better trained and more experienced it could sift the applications and reduce them to the minimum. Probably the lower rate in Cook county was also due to the large percentage of aliens and migrants in Chicago who were unable to meet the citizenship and residence requirements of the old-age assistance law.

Altho the Farm Security Administration took care of a fairly large number of cases in distress areas, farm grants provided for only a small percentage of the total case load. It must be remembered, how-

¹Monthly Bulletin on Relief Statistics, Ill. Emergency Relief Commission 4, No. 3, p. 14, 1937.

ever, that its loan program without doubt kept many farm people off relief.

Private agencies provided for little more than 1 percent of the total at any one time.

Proportion of the population on relief. Altho both the number of cases and the percentage of the population receiving home assistance

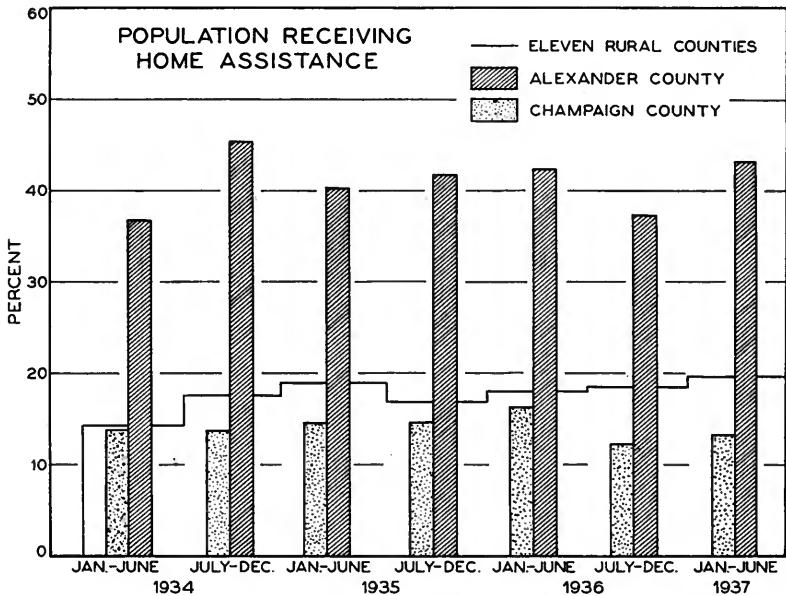


FIG. 2.—PERCENTAGE OF THE TOTAL POPULATION RECEIVING HOME ASSISTANCE IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934-JUNE, 1937
(1930 U. S. Census figures used for total population)

increased during this period, the percentage of the population receiving aid increased much less than the number of cases. This would of course indicate that there were fewer persons per case.

Figures for the actual number of persons assisted were not available except for those receiving general relief, blind pensions, and old-age assistance from July, 1936, to July, 1937. The number of persons receiving assistance during the period studied was partially estimated from the number of cases. When the actual number of persons was not known it was assumed that there was an average of 3.7 persons per case. Allowances for variations between counties were made based upon the actual size of the general relief cases in February, 1935, and the Works Progress Administration cases in March, 1939.

The percentage of the total population receiving general relief

funds in the eleven counties in the federal survey increased from 14.3 in the first half of 1934 to 19.7 in the first half of 1937 (Fig. 2). The percentage of the total population on general relief in Alexander county during this period was more than twice the percentage for the eleven counties. Champaign county consistently had a lower percentage on relief than did the eleven counties. The range was from 5.2 percent of the total population on relief in Woodford county in the second six months of 1935 to 45.4 percent in Alexander county in the second six months of 1934. Six of the thirteen counties (Alexander, Pope, Scott, Franklin, Coles, and Montgomery) had one-fourth or more of the total population on relief in the first six months of 1937. Such high proportions of relief population should cause every citizen to be gravely concerned as to how the load may be effectively decreased.

Expenditures

Distribution of expenditures. Total expenditures¹ for home assistance in the eleven counties increased from \$1,033,634 in the first six months of 1934 to \$2,834,271 in the first six months of 1937 (Fig. 1). The average monthly expenditures per county for each kind of home assistance are shown in Table 4.

During 1934 and 1935 over 88 percent of the total amount expended for home assistance in the eleven rural counties was general relief funds handled by the township or county and by the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission. After the advent of the Works Progress Administration in late 1935 and the old-age assistance program in 1936, the proportion of general relief to the total funds began to change considerably. During the first half of 1936 the Works Progress Administration handled 65 percent of the total expenditures in the eleven rural counties. In 1937 its part was still over 45 percent. Old-age assistance grants represented over 25 percent of the total funds spent in the first half of 1937 in the eleven rural counties. General assistance funds dropped from 91 percent of the total amount spent for assistance in 1934 to 21 percent in 1937.

Expenditures per capita and per case. Expenditures for home assistance per person in each of the thirteen counties were computed on the basis of the total population according to the 1930 U. S. Census (Table 5). If every person had been taxed equally, the burden would have been heaviest in Alexander county during the first six months of 1936, when expenditures for home assistance totaled \$22.91 per person

¹Total benefits paid in any county would include, besides general relief and the other forms of aid already mentioned, the wages for county works programs in early 1934 and drouth relief in the summer and fall of 1934 and 1936. Doubtlessly some farmers were also kept off relief by payments of the Federal Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

TABLE 4.—AVERAGE EXPENDITURES PER COUNTY PER MONTH FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF HOME ASSISTANCE: ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934-JUNE, 1937

Kind of assistance	1934		1935		1936		1937
	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half
Total general assistance..	\$14 323	\$23 712	\$27 436	\$22 090	\$11 435	\$ 8 574	\$ 9 335
County or township relief.....	1 922	1 968	2 119	1 389	1 920	8 574	9 335
Illinois Emergency Relief Commission funds.....	12 401	21 744	25 317	20 701	9 515	.....	.....
Veterans' aid.....	\$ 5	\$ 7	\$ 41	\$ 46	\$ 55	\$ 26	\$ 29
Blind pensions*.....	757	769	753	857	886	889	856
Mothers' pensions.....	521	555	631	549	679	599	669
Works Progress Administration wages.....	.....	.....	.....	5 353	25 666	22 888	19 495
Farm Security Administration grants.....	.....	.....	.....	65	459	143	100
Old-age assistance*.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	93	7 017	10 918
Private aid.....	54	39	63	54	52	33	638
Total for all kinds of assistance.....	\$15 660	\$25 083	\$28 924	\$29 014	\$39 326	\$40 170	\$42 943

*These are all one-person cases. Other kinds of home assistance may include some one-person cases.

for six months. Expenditures were lightest in Monroe county during the first six months of 1934, when the total spent per person amounted to 88 cents. The average expenditure per person for six months in the eleven counties had almost tripled from 1934 to 1937, the largest increases occurring in the southern counties.

The monthly expenditure per case had increased somewhat in the

TABLE 5.—TOTAL PER-CAPITA EXPENDITURES FOR HOME ASSISTANCE BY SIX-MONTH PERIODS: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934-JUNE, 1937^a

County	1934		1935		1936		1937
	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half
Coles.....	\$4.88	\$5.64	\$9.29	\$9.86	\$14.67	\$13.10	\$14.19
DeKalb.....	3.85	5.11	5.50	3.30	4.73	3.81	5.05
Franklin.....	4.00	7.80	9.58	11.72	13.49	16.59	15.15
Mason.....	2.90	4.44	4.31	4.12	6.27	6.50	8.65
Mercer.....	3.44	5.50	5.26	4.46	5.76	6.12	7.58
Monroe.....	.88	1.53	1.68	1.81	3.78	3.91	4.34
Montgomery.....	6.01	9.25	9.24	8.87	12.27	11.14	12.43
Pope.....	1.63	5.50	4.06	5.47	9.11	13.34	15.87
Scott.....	2.37	5.67	8.23	8.41	12.37	12.14	12.78
Whiteside.....	2.53	4.34	4.27	3.05	4.71	3.51	4.60
Woodford.....	1.72	2.54	2.33	1.96	3.14	3.34	3.91
Alexander.....	8.52	15.77	13.16	15.15	22.91	18.19	20.64
Champaign.....	3.86	5.42	6.00	5.96	8.16	7.16	7.52

^aFigures are computed on the basis of the 1930 U. S. Census.

period studied (Table 6). The highest average expenditure per case was \$46.38 for wages paid by the Works Progress Administration. The highest average expenditure for cases on direct relief was less than half that amount. Since blind pensions and old-age assistance grants were paid to individuals, it is quite possible that more than one was received by a single family. For example, blind pensions amounted to \$60 in one family where two persons each received \$30. By March,

TABLE 6.—AVERAGE EXPENDITURE PER CASE PER MONTH FOR DIFFERENT KINDS OF HOME ASSISTANCE: ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934—JUNE, 1937

Kind of assistance	1934		1935		1936		1937
	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half
Total general assistance..	\$15.07	\$20.13	\$21.66	\$19.88	\$18.57	\$15.35	\$15.98
Veterans' aid.....	10.46	10.38	12.50	12.62	13.41	16.46	34.68
Blind pensions ^a	29.72	28.74	27.35	26.30	25.26	25.47	25.45
Mothers' pensions.....	13.92	14.34	15.19	14.53	15.43	15.49	17.41
Works Progress Administration wages.....	.....	.....	.....	33.07 ^b	46.38	40.49	41.47
Farm Security Administration grants.....	.....	.....	.....	25.30	26.30	16.56 ^c	14.66 ^c
Old-age assistance ^a.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	9.19	14.02	15.00
Private aid.....	3.47	2.73	3.23	3.47	3.67	2.93	20.73

^aThese are all one-person cases. Other kinds of home assistance may include some one-person cases. ^bThis average is low because at the beginning of the program many assignments were not full-time. ^cThis average was lowered by comparatively small drouth grants made to many families that were not on relief and needed only temporary help.

1939, the average monthly old-age assistance grant had been raised to \$23.66 in Cook county, and it amounted to \$16.45 downstate. Monroe county paid an average monthly old-age assistance benefit of \$12.30, the lowest in the thirteen rural counties. The mother's pension was the most inadequate of all forms of assistance. No direct allowance was made for the mother herself, and payments for dependent children were in many instances as low as \$3 a month per case. Since allowances for veterans and funds distributed by private agencies were largely supplementary, they cannot be compared with other kinds of assistance intended to cover living costs.

The problem of cutting expenditures. While the aim should be to decrease greatly the total expenditures for relief programs, budgets for dependent families cannot safely be cut. As the data show, they were often far from adequate. If the family is to become self-supporting it must have health, vigor, and initiative, which depend upon an allowance large enough to provide adequate diet, shelter, and care.

A detailed study of administrative expense has not been included because many of the figures for the period before 1936 were not avail-

able. To the officials who took care of blind pensions and mothers' allowances this work was incidental to their other duties. The expense of administering poor relief often was not separated from other expenditures in the township reports. In some cases the total spent for salaries or fees seemed unusually high. In one county, fees and compensation amounted to \$500 out of a levy of \$1,000; in another county, \$1,400 out of a levy of \$4,000; and in a third, \$1,250 out of a levy of \$2,650. Administrative expenses exclusive of car mileage were \$400 in a fourth county where the total expenditure for relief was \$1,500. After July 1, 1936, expenses for local officials were set at 5 percent by the state legislature. There were probably many circumstances in which adequate administration was hampered by this low figure.

To cut the costs of administration effectively in any county, a thorough local study must be made to discover where the expenses are unduly heavy. This would be one of the first steps toward organizing better service.

Sources of funds. It is not possible in this brief study to consider in detail the sources of funds. The general relief funds provided by counties and townships came from local levies up to July, 1936. The Illinois Emergency Relief Commission funds came largely from federal sources up to July, 1935. Afterwards state funds provided the largest part of this assistance. Blind and mothers' pensions were paid from local and state funds. Old-age assistance came from state and federal funds. Works Progress Administration and Farm Security Administration funds were entirely federal for the period studied.

TABLE 7.—PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR HOME ASSISTANCE CARRIED BY THE ILLINOIS EMERGENCY RELIEF COMMISSION IN EACH OF ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY, 1934—JUNE, 1936, AND RELIEF RATE FOR JUNE, 1935^a

County	Relief rate June, 1935 ^a	1934		1935		1936
		First half	Second half	First half	Second half	First half ^b
	<i>percl.</i>	<i>percl.</i>	<i>percl.</i>	<i>percl.</i>	<i>percl.</i>	<i>percl.</i>
Woodford.....	3.1	55.4	67.7	66.7	30.7	12.3
Monroe.....	4.3	49.7	68.9	70.9	42.6	13.3
Whiteside.....	6.4	80.0	83.9	77.8	52.9	21.4
DeKalb.....	7.5	64.2	71.4	71.8	59.8	18.7
Mason.....	8.0	53.7	72.2	71.2	51.9	17.7
Mercer.....	10.0	58.6	74.2	71.3	64.3	25.8
Montgomery.....	20.2	84.1	90.3	90.2	70.6	22.8
Pope.....	20.9	96.9	98.8	99.4	67.1	33.5
Coles.....	21.0	80.2	83.8	89.1	67.7	26.8
Scott.....	23.6	55.2	81.9	88.3	76.9	33.1
Franklin.....	29.4	96.9	98.5	98.6	83.8	24.9

^aThe relief rate for June, 1935, is a good norm for the period studied. Population on which percentage was computed was that given in the 1930 U. S. Census. ^bBy this time the Works Progress Administration carried much of the load.

Considerable dissatisfaction was felt because some counties raised only small sums locally and received large amounts of assistance from the outside. Obviously the higher the relief rate the more necessary it was for the county to have outside help. Counties with low relief rates were able to pay a considerable part of the costs of their own relief and welfare work thruout the entire period. Even so, the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission assumed the greater part of the load in every county in the first six months of 1935, Woodford being the only county bearing as much as a third of the load in that period (Table 7).

It is apparent that some counties could not have carried the relief burden alone. There were acute agricultural problems in Franklin and Montgomery counties, where the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission took care of the largest part of the load. Franklin and Montgomery counties had heavy loads largely because the mining industry had been affected. As the newer agencies assumed part of the responsibility, the need for general poor assistance was lessened, but even in 1937 many counties were still unable to finance this load. From January to December in 1937 eleven rural counties provided only 18.5 per cent of the funds, whereas in the state as a whole the counties pro-

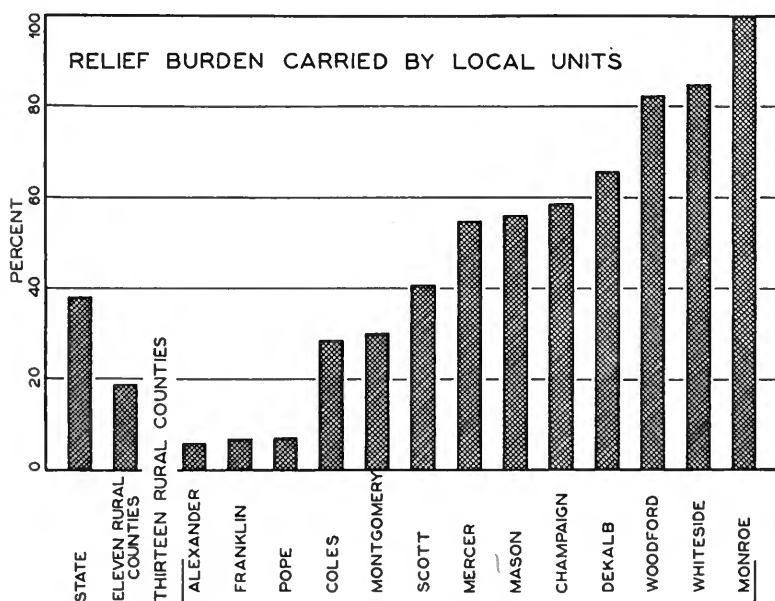


FIG. 3.—PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL OBLIGATIONS FOR POOR RELIEF CARRIED BY THE LOCAL UNITS IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, JANUARY THRU DECEMBER, 1937

vided an average of 37.7 percent (Fig. 3). At the same time seven of the thirteen counties provided funds for more than 50 percent of their relief load, and Monroe county carried 100 percent of it.

PART III EFFECTIVENESS OF ADMINISTRATION

Duplication

The number of officials that were responsible for distributing the general relief funds in eight of the township-governed counties included in the survey varied from 12 to 22 according to the number of townships. Some of these officials handled large case loads, while others had small loads. Six of these officials gave out no relief funds at all during the period of the study.

The total number of agencies actively distributing home assistance in the thirteen rural counties is shown below:

<i>Type of agency</i>	1930	1934	1935	1936	1937
9 township-governed counties.....	112	191	190	57	209
4 commission-governed counties.....	4 ^a	9	9	18	19
Total.....	116	200	199	75	228

(*Alexander county is not included.)

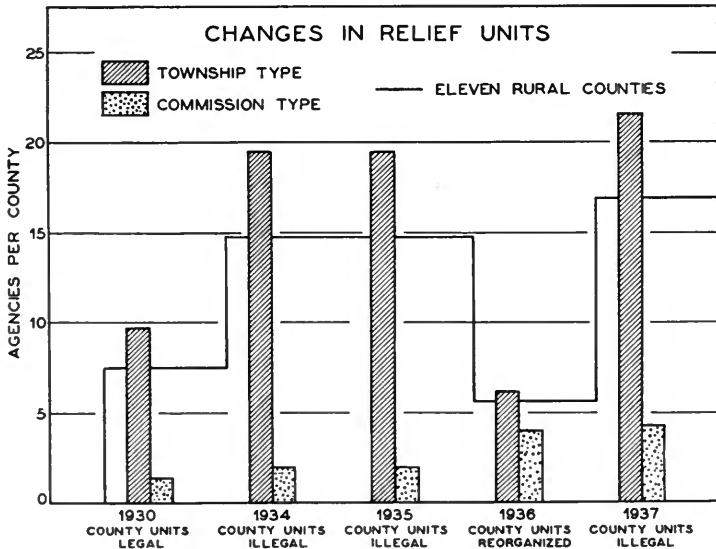


FIG. 4.—AVERAGE NUMBER OF AGENCIES HANDLING HOME ASSISTANCE IN ELEVEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES IN JANUARY, 1930, AND IN JANUARY, 1934-1937

During the first half of 1937 there were almost twice the number of agencies that existed during the first half of 1930. In the eleven counties the number of agencies increased from 83 in 1930 to 186 in 1937. In 1936 there was a big drop because the county government was responsible for relief. In 1937, after the administration of general assistance had been turned over to the townships again, six counties each had more than 20 agencies; Champaign county alone had 36 agencies.

Except in 1936, when the county was responsible for relief, counties under the commission form of government had fewer administrative units than counties with the township form (Fig. 4).

Since there was no way of definitely determining whether an applicant was already getting help, it was difficult to avoid duplication between agencies when a large number existed. During the years that the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission carried most of the load, its county offices made an attempt to do away with overlapping by checking with other agencies. After July 1, 1936, when the state relief commission was serving only in a semi-advisory capacity, there was considerable duplication between the local relief agencies and the old-age assistance offices. In one instance the township supervisor found to his surprise that some thirty persons were illegally receiving both relief and old-age assistance benefits.¹

Duplications were possible other than those between general relief and old-age assistance cases. But there were serious disadvantages in the categorical system other than that of making it possible for clients to apply for help fraudulently. Suffering occurred in some instances when cases were not followed up because there was a question as to where the responsibility lay. Medical care was usually not provided for in the relief family's regular budget and it had to be paid for by supplementary funds. A single family might have had to depend upon several agencies for support. For example, the children might have been taken care of by a mother's pension, the mother by poor relief, the grandmother by old-age assistance, and the uncle by a blind pension. Before each case was carefully investigated at least four trips to the family would have been necessary, and this would have involved considerable duplication of travel expenses. Not only was the categorical program of relief expensive and at times inefficient, but it was difficult to adhere strictly to legal requirements when there was no central authority to pass upon cases. In many counties certain families received aid from other agencies when the local supervisor refused them township funds, and often the local supervisor gave aid when other agencies had refused assistance.

¹Since 1937 the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission has checked for duplication thruout the state. As a result of its findings, certain procedures for clearance between departments of public welfare and relief offices were set up in practically all counties.

Because of these inherent disadvantages one may question the wisdom of continuing the categorical system of relief programs used during this period. Even if each kind of assistance is handled as effectively as possible, it would always be necessary to have some agency to coordinate the separate categories. Units of administration smaller than the county units are neither efficient nor economical, as has been shown by studies in other states.¹ Citizens should therefore study carefully the desirability of making changes in the system in order to forestall situations such as were revealed by the present study.

Personnel

The township supervisors and county commissioners who administered direct relief funds were elected officials. The relief work was only part of their regular duties but it could, and it often did take all of their time even tho they had been elected for the office regardless of their fitness for this kind of work. Many local relief administrators interviewed said that they found it difficult to be nonpartisan no matter how honest they tried to be. Other studies have shown that local officials, for the purpose of securing votes at the next election, have at times granted relief to those not actually in need.² The field workers conducting this survey heard repeated accusations of political discrimination in distributing relief funds, such as forcing clients to vote certain tickets. These charges were made against members of both major political parties.

None of the local officials interviewed had professional training for a relief administrator. Professional public welfare associations and relief agencies in larger cities require those who do case work to have the equivalent of a college degree and a year's extra training.³ Blind pensions were also administered by elected officials, none of whom, in the counties surveyed, professed a knowledge of how to train or educate the blind to become self-supporting.

The county judges were named to administer the Mothers' Pension Act⁴ because they were the most capable officials available. However, none of the judges in the counties studied had any social-service training. As a result many people received aid who were not eligible. An

¹See for example, Clague, Ewan, Seventeenth century poor relief in the twentieth century, Joint Com. on Res. of the Community Council of Philadelphia and the Penn. School of Social Work, 1935.

²See Proposals from Griffenhagen & Associates in Rpt. of the Subcommittee on Consolidation of Local Govt. of the Ill. Commission on Taxation and Expenditures, Springfield, Ill., 1933.

³Dunn, Catherine M., What price local poor relief, Amer. Pub. Welfare Assoc., Chicago, 1936.

⁴Title as amended by Act approved July 10, 1935. See Illinois Revised Statutes, 1937, ch. 23, p. 301.

examination made by the Illinois State Department of Public Welfare revealed that 45 percent of those receiving mothers' pensions did not meet the requirements, and over half of this 45 percent had adequate incomes. At the time this study was made Illinois was losing about a million dollars a year from federal funds for the blind and for dependent children because of failure to comply with the ruling of the Federal Social Security Board that these services be handled by a central agency set up for the purpose.

Veterans' aid was administered by untrained workers at Legion posts. Among those giving out such assistance were a druggist, a milkman, and a barber.

The local officials who took care of old-age assistance in the counties surveyed had no training for the job so far as could be determined from the interviews made. The act of July 8, 1937, might be expected to raise the qualifications materially.¹

Agencies using federal funds required somewhat higher qualifications than the local agencies. While the units of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission by no means had entire staffs that were trained, the administrators had previous training in most cases and many of them were members of the American Association of Social Workers. The Farm Security Administration required that the county rural rehabilitation supervisors and the county home management supervisors be graduates in agriculture and home economics, respectively, from an accredited college of agriculture except in rare instances when the candidate had wide experience in farming and related fields.

The trend seems to be to secure better trained professional workers to handle the administration of relief and related services. This should be encouraged, as it will assure less partisanship and more effective work. The task of administration has grown to such proportions that there must be insistence upon all possible efficiency.

Records

Since accurate records are an important part of administration, a survey was made of the records for home-assistance cases in the thirteen rural counties.

¹The act of July 8, 1937, placed with the State Department of Public Welfare the responsibility for selecting the county personnel to administer old-age assistance. A merit system was set up and superintendents are placed according to their rank on examinations. Candidates are now required to be either high-school graduates with six years' experience in full-time paid positions in either business, a profession, or public service, three years of which involved some responsibility for administration, or they must be college graduates with two years of special experience. Investigators in this division must have been residents of the county for three years and must be high-school graduates with four years' experience in welfare work or related fields.

The records of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission gave a complete account of expenditures and number of cases for all the months that it existed as a relief agency. Records of the county boards of supervisors and county commissioners seemed to be accurate as far as they went. It was possible to obtain the number of cases and the amounts of payments for all dependent children and blind cases but it was sometimes difficult to read the figures because of complicated systems of bookkeeping.

In some cases figures secured from county books for blind pensions and mothers' allowances were not in agreement with figures certified to the office of Public Welfare and the state auditor, especially in cases where payments were delinquent. In one county three different sets of figures for blind pensions during the period studied were furnished by three different officials. Altho the differences were small, the records obviously were not accurate. Other discrepancies in record-keeping indicated the need for greater uniformity thruout the state.

It was difficult to obtain the number of relief cases and the amounts expended for them. The local officials usually paid the bills quarterly and, despite legal requirements, they kept no record of families helped in any of the counties included in the survey except Montgomery. A county agent of public relief was employed in Montgomery for about ten months and he maintained good records.

Township records were the most difficult to obtain before July 1, 1936. Altho the law requires a yearly report, one supervisor who had held office for years had never made a report. Many of the annual records were hard to understand without extensive explanations from the authors. Very few supervisors kept itemized accounts of orders. Most of them could show only receipted bills, often representing group orders for several months. In many cases no separate account was kept of the general town fund and the poor-relief fund.

The few supervisors who did keep accurate and detailed reports were usually located in the open-country areas and had small case loads. Franklin was the only township-governed county in which a report was obtained from each supervisor for the period immediately following 1930, and the loads were all small, most of the cases having been transferred to the county Emergency Relief Committee.

The only series of figures that seemed to indicate township expenditures at all reliably was the yearly township poor-relief levy, which is on file in the county clerk's office. One township made no levy for two years because the town hall burned down and the insurance money was used for poor relief. In some counties with small numbers on relief no levies were made in certain years because of accumulated funds. Since it was not possible to estimate the number of cases from the amounts of levies, and since most supervisors seemed unable to estimate the number of cases, it was necessary to

obtain estimates from the Emergency Relief offices. The matter was complicated because in many instances medical care for the unemployed was provided from local funds and because the number of cases changed considerably from month to month. In most of the nine township-governed counties the county administrators of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission could usually give a fair estimate of case loads and expenditures in each township because for a time the county relief offices had had the responsibility for the entire load of welfare and unemployment cases and local officials had reported expenditures and discussed cases with them.

After July 1, 1936, the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission was designated by law to allocate funds to local governmental units. It was also authorized to obtain complete and accurate accounts of expenditures from all local officials since state funds were being used.

Case histories were found in county offices of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, the Farm Security Administration, and the Division of Old Age Assistance. For the period before July, 1936, no semblance of social data, even in the form of a card file, was found in any county or township relief office visited in the study except in the county offices of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission. Those counties that set up relief departments later took over some of the procedure of the Commission altho some township officials did not care to accept them. County judges usually had social records of families receiving mothers' pensions but, so far as could be determined, there was no record of blind-pension cases other than the doctor's certification or an occasional notation made on the county books.

Public Indifference a Cause of Poor Administration

If rural people wish to retain a voice in the administration of relief they must take part in making the policies. The fundamental cause of poor local administration during the period studied lay in the fact that the average citizen was not interested in seeing that a trained personnel was selected or that adequate provisions were made for financing relief and keeping accurate records. In one county the town clerk had to call three meetings before it was possible to make the poor levy for 1936-37, as only three persons came to each of the first two meetings. In another county less than ten persons passed the poor levy and this number included the members of the town board.

When cases are handled intelligently, many relief clients can become self-supporting in a short time and substantial sums will be saved for the taxpayer. The goal is to make dependents self-supporting in rural as well as in urban areas. Since there are more aged and disabled in rural areas, the task is more difficult and there is a need for even better administration than in urban areas.

PART IV THE RELIEF CLIENTS

Characteristics¹

Race and age. Native-born whites made up more than 92 percent of all persons on relief in the eleven counties, compared with almost 75 percent for the state as a whole (Table 8). Negroes made up 44.5 percent of those on relief in Alexander county, 11.7 percent in Champaign county, and only .7 percent in the eleven counties. In the relief population of the state there were 13.2 percent Negroes.

TABLE 8.—PERCENTAGE OF DIFFERENT RACES IN TOTAL POPULATION (1930) AND IN THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Race	State		11 rural counties		Alexander county		Champaign county	
	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
White (native-born)...	79.3	74.6	92.4	92.1	69.6	55.3	93.9	87.5
White (foreign-born)...	16.0	11.3	7.1	6.8	1.0	.2	2.9	.8
Total white.....	95.3	85.9	99.5	98.9	70.6	55.5	96.8	88.3
Negro.....	4.3	13.2	.4	.7	29.2	44.5	3.2	11.7
All other races.....	.5	.9	....	.2	.2	....	....	....

Foreign-born clients comprized less than 7 percent of the total relief load in the eleven rural counties compared with 11.3 percent in the state as a whole and less than 1 percent in Champaign and Alexander counties.

The proportion of young people under 20 years of age on relief in the eleven counties was about the same as in the state as a whole (Table 9). However, there was a larger share of them in all relief percentages than in the general population, showing that the presence of children probably did tend to push a family onto the relief rolls. In the age group that normally presents the most productive years of a lifetime, 25 to 44 years, there were fewer on relief in the eleven rural

¹Data for this section of the study were obtained from "Illinois Persons on Relief in 1935," Ill. Emergency Relief Commission under the auspices of the W. P. A., Chicago, 1937; also from Monthly Bulletin on Relief Statistics 2, No. 2, p. 11, Ill. Emergency Relief Commission, Chicago, 1935. The data used were for February, 1935, and therefore included the persons who were later certified from the relief rolls to be employed on Works Progress Administration projects and those who would have been eligible for old-age assistance, as well as those receiving assistance from local relief agencies.

TABLE 9.—PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION (1930) AND OF THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION IN DIFFERENT AGE-GROUPS: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	16 to 20 years ^a		21 to 24 years ^a		25 to 44 years		45 to 64 years		65 years and over	
	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	12.0	15.1	11.9	8.7	43.8	41.1	24.7	26.8	7.4	7.8
Eleven counties.....	13.3	15.9	10.6	9.6	38.2	36.3	27.6	27.7	10.3	10.1
Alexander county.....	13.0	13.2	11.5	8.6	41.4	41.5	27.4	26.2	6.5	9.3
Champaign county.....	12.4	15.0	12.8	9.2	39.9	43.5	30.5	25.3	8.7	6.5

^aThe figures for the population given in the 1930 U. S. Census are for the age-groups 15 to 19 years and 20 to 24 years.

counties than in the state as a whole. But in the age groups beyond 44 years the proportion on relief was higher in the eleven rural counties than in the state as a whole.

Size of family. The average number of persons in relief families in the eleven counties was 4.4 persons, whereas the state average was 4.1 persons. A larger proportion of families with six or more members was on general relief in the eleven counties than in the state as a whole (Table 10). However, Alexander county, which had the highest relief rate in the state, had fewer large families on relief than the eleven counties. The heavy relief rate in Alexander county was among the small families in the city of Cairo. Pope, another county with a high relief rate, also had fewer large families on general relief than the

TABLE 10.—PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES OF DIFFERENT SIZE IN TOTAL POPULATION (1930) AND IN THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Families with 2 members or less		Families with 3 members		Families with 4 members		Families with 5 members		Families with 6 members or more	
	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population	Total population	Relief population
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	27.0	24.2	24.0	22.1	20.1	18.4	12.8	12.9	16.5	20.1
Eleven counties.....	26.5	21.5	23.5	21.2	19.7	19.3	12.9	12.8	16.9	22.5
Alexander county.....	28.0	29.8	22.0	23.2	17.6	16.6	12.3	10.8	17.9	17.0
Champaign county.....	29.1	19.7	24.4	20.0	18.8	17.1	12.3	14.1	15.2	24.5

average for the 11 counties. These data seem to indicate that, while large families were more likely to need relief than small families, size was not the main factor determining whether a family would be on relief.

TABLE 11.—PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES ON GENERAL RELIEF WITH NO CHILDREN AND WITH CHILDREN UNDER 16 YEARS OLD: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Relief families with no children	Relief families with children under 16 years
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	20.0	65.2
Eleven counties.....	20.3	64.8
Alexander county.....	27.5	57.8
Champaign county.....	20.1	67.7

About the same proportion of families with no children was found on general relief in these rural counties as in the state as a whole. Again Alexander county differed considerably from the average, having a higher percentage of families with no children than the average for the eleven counties or the average for the state (Table 11).

Fewer broken families¹ were found in the rural areas than in

TABLE 12.—COMPOSITION OF GENERAL RELIEF FAMILIES IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND IN THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Husband and wife only	Husband, wife, and children	Husband or wife and children
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	20.0	58.7	21.2
Eleven counties.....	20.4	63.5	16.1
Alexander county.....	27.4	49.1	23.5
Champaign county.....	20.1	64.5	15.4

Alexander county or in the state as a whole (Table 12). Even in the relief population there is a greater tendency for the family to remain intact in rural areas than in urban areas.

¹Broken families are families in which husband and wife are separated or divorced or in which either parent is dead.

TABLE 13.—PERCENTAGE OF THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION OVER 16 YEARS OLD ATTENDING SCHOOL AND PERCENTAGE OF THOSE NOT IN SCHOOL GROUPED ACCORDING TO THE AMOUNT OF FORMAL EDUCATION RECEIVED: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Attending school February, 1935	Not attending school in February, 1935					
		No schooling	Grades 1 to 7 only completed	Grade 8 only completed	Entered high school	Completed high school	Entered college
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	3.6	5.7	40.1	29.3	12.7	6.3	0.6
Eleven counties.....	4.0	5.1	45.9	29.6	9.9	4.7	0.9
Alexander county.....	2.8	10.4	55.1	18.0	7.7	3.9	2.0
Champaign county.....	4.2	2.7	37.4	30.9	5.5	7.9	1.2

Education. Judged by the number of years spent in school, the heads of relief families in the eleven counties had considerably less education than the heads of the relief families in the whole state (Fig. 5). In Alexander county, which had a large Negro population, 11.9 percent of the heads of relief families had no schooling; in

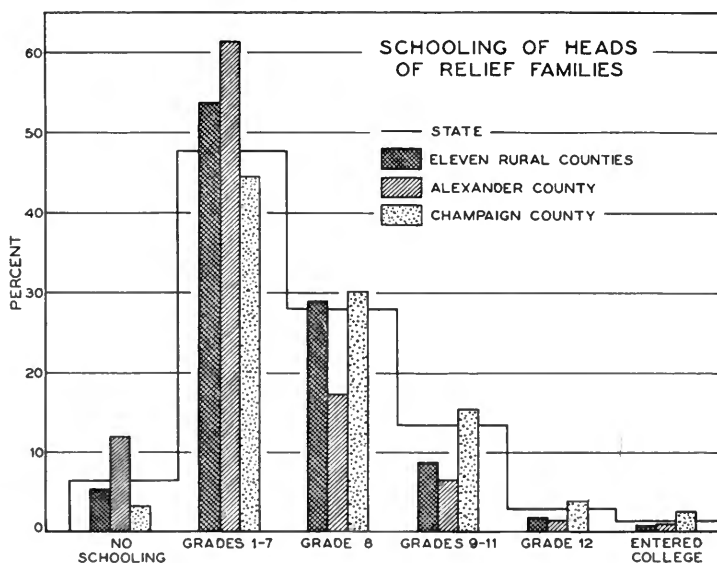


FIG. 5.—PERCENTAGE OF HEADS OF RELIEF FAMILIES COMPLETING PUBLIC-SCHOOL GRADE INDICATED, THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, FEBRUARY, 1935 (Groupings are mutually exclusive)

TABLE 14.—PERCENTAGE OF THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION 6 TO 20 YEARS OLD NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL GROUPED ACCORDING TO AGE: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	6 to 13 years	14 to 15 years	16 to 17 years	18 to 20 years	Total
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	7.2	4.3	29.7	58.0	23.7
Eleven counties.....	7.8	8.3	28.9	55.0	25.4
Alexander county.....	11.1	6.6	28.4	53.9	25.4
Champaign county.....	6.5	5.1	30.3	58.1	20.3

Franklin county 10.5 percent of the heads of relief families had no schooling. Also, only 1.9 percent of the heads of relief families had completed high school in the eleven counties and 1.6 percent in Alexander county, compared with 3 percent in the state as a whole.

A lower percentage of persons more than 16 years old had received education above the eighth grade in the eleven rural counties than in the state as a whole (Table 13). In addition it appeared that rural children on relief were at a disadvantage since more than 16 percent of the children 6 to 15 years old from relief families in the eleven counties were not in school compared with 11.5 percent for the whole state (Table 14). Of those youths from relief families who were 16 to 20 years old and not in school, an average of more than a half had not completed the eighth grade. Altho a larger percentage of these youths had completed the eighth grade in the eleven rural counties than in the state, fewer of the rural youths had completed high school (Table 15).

The poorer rural areas had an acute problem of providing schooling. In Alexander county as much as two-thirds of the relief population 16 to 20 years old who were not attending school had not com-

TABLE 15.—PERCENTAGE OF THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION 16 TO 20 YEARS OLD NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL GROUPED ACCORDING TO COMPLETION OF THE EIGHTH GRADE AND OF HIGH SCHOOL: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Grade 8 not completed	Grade 8 only completed	High school completed
	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
State.....	54.4	35.0	10.6
Eleven counties.....	53.1	37.2	9.7
Alexander county.....	66.6	25.9	7.5
Champaign county.....	54.1	35.1	10.8

TABLE 16.—PERCENTAGE OF HEADS* OF FAMILIES ON GENERAL RELIEF WHO WERE EMPLOYED OR COULD BE EMPLOYED, AND PERCENTAGE NOT ABLE TO WORK: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Men heads of relief families, percentage that were—			Women heads of relief families, percentage that were—			All heads of relief families, percentage that were—		
	Em- ployed	Em- ploy- able but out of work	Unem- ploy- able ^b	Em- ployed	Em- ploy- able but out of work	Unem- ploy- able ^b	Em- ployed	Em- ploy- able but out of work	Unem- ploy- able ^b
State.....	10.2	79.8	10.0	5.1	33.6	61.3	9.3	71.3	18.8
Eleven counties...	12.1	74.1	13.8	4.8	27.9	67.3	11.2	68.4	20.2
Alexander county....	18.2	55.1	13.7	8.0	37.4	54.5	16.3	62.2	21.5
Champaign county....	8.4	73.3	8.0	10.0	30.9	59.0	9.6	77.1	14.3

*The head of the family is the husband or the person having major responsibility for the support of the family. In case the husband is dead or unemployable, the wife, the oldest child, or an uncle or aunt might be the head. ^bFor the purposes of this study a person was classified as unemployable; if he had a physical or mental disability which might be harmful to the safety of himself or others; if he was needed at home to care for small children or other individuals; or if he was in full-time attendance at day school.

pleted the eighth grade. Similar conditions were reported as existing in other counties in the poorer sections of Illinois.

Employability. More heads of relief families were classified as unemployable in the eleven rural counties than in the state as a whole (Table 16). Many more female than male heads of relief families were considered as unemployable because women were placed in this classification if they had children or other individuals to care for.

TABLE 17.—PERCENTAGE OF MEN AND WOMEN IN THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION 16 YEARS OLD OR OLDER THAT WERE UNEMPLOYABLE^a AND THEIR AGE GROUPINGS: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)

Area	Unemploy- able men 16 years old or older in relief popu- lation	Unemployable men in relief population—			Unemploy- able women 16 years old or older in relief popu- lation	Unemployable women in relief population—		
		16 to 20 years	21 to 64 years	65 years and over		16 to 20 years	21 to 64 years	65 years and over
State.....	<i>perct.</i> 13.3	<i>perct.</i> 26.5	<i>perct.</i> 33.2	<i>perct.</i> 40.2	<i>perct.</i> 73.3	<i>perct.</i> 16.8	<i>perct.</i> 73.0	<i>perct.</i> 10.1
Eleven counties...	17.5	21.6	34.3	44.0	80.8	19.6	68.8	11.5
Alexander county..	18.8	15.4	36.8	47.7	67.1	20.4	67.2	12.3
Champaign county	13.0	32.4	33.4	34.1	76.7	21.0	71.0	8.0

^aFor explanation of "unemployable" see footnote to Table 16.

A larger percentage of the aged were on relief in the eleven rural counties than in the state as a whole. Forty-four percent of the male unemployables on relief in the eleven counties and 11.5 percent of the female unemployables were over 65, compared with 40.2 percent and

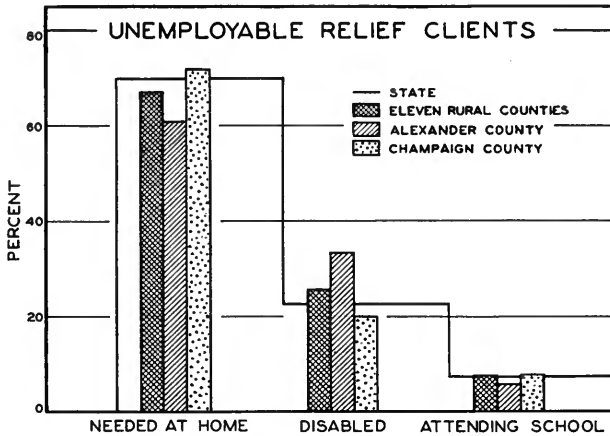


FIG. 6.—REASONS WHY UNEMPLOYABLE RELIEF CLIENTS SIXTEEN YEARS OLD AND OLDER WERE UNABLE TO TAKE EMPLOYMENT IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, FEBRUARY, 1935

10.1 percent respectively in the state as a whole (Table 17). More than 25 percent of unemployable persons 16 years old and older on relief in the eleven counties had some physical or mental disability, compared with more than 22 percent for the state (Fig. 6). About one-third of those 16 years old or older on relief in Alexander county were classified as disabled.

The fact that such a large proportion of the relief population in these twelve counties was disabled indicates that more adequate medical care is needed for those on relief in rural areas.

More unemployables on relief in the rural counties. In general, people on relief in the rural counties of Illinois were predominantly native-born whites, and they had less schooling than those on relief in the urban areas. As to the proportion of relief families with children under sixteen years old, there was not much difference between the rural areas and the state as a whole, but in the rural areas there was a greater percentage of large families on relief. There were also more aged people in need of help living in the rural areas, a fact that was borne out when the old-age assistance program was put into operation. Both because of this larger number of older people and because of the greater incidence of physical disability, there were more unemployables on relief in the rural areas.

Their Farming Problems

A tendency to consider problems of relief as belonging largely to urban areas has developed partly from the fact that such problems seem more serious when confined to a small area and partly from the fact that the rural areas of distress are often isolated from public notice. However, the seriousness of the distress in the rural areas during the depression is indicated by the high proportion of rural

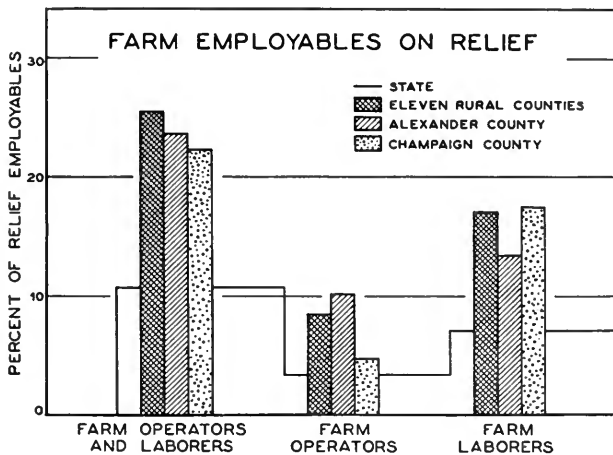


FIG. 7.—PROPORTION OF EMPLOYABLE RELIEF CLIENTS OVER SIXTEEN YEARS OLD NORMALLY ENGAGED IN FARMING IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES, FEBRUARY, 1935

relief clients in February, 1935, when one-tenth of all relief clients in Illinois were people who normally would have been engaged in agriculture.¹ In the rural counties the proportion was of course much larger. In the eleven rural counties included in the federal survey more than 25 percent of all persons on relief over 16 years old who were considered as experienced employables would normally have been engaged in farming (Fig. 7). About two-thirds of this number were farm laborers, but there were actually about 1,100 farm operators also on relief.

While as much as 25 percent of these unemployed would normally have been engaged in farming, only 22 percent reported their former occupation to have been agriculture (Table 18). Evidently a few had found some other work previous to the time they went on relief, but the larger proportion had been unable to make even a temporary ad-

¹Smith, R. C., Public assistance to low income farmers in the North, Jour. Farm Econ. 21, No. 1, pp. 178-187, 1939.

TABLE 18.—PERCENTAGE OF EMPLOYABLES IN THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION OVER 16 YEARS OLD FORMERLY ENGAGED IN SPECIFIED INDUSTRIES, SERVICES AND PROFESSIONS: THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES AND THE STATE (FEBRUARY, 1935)^a

Area	Agriculture	Extraction of minerals	Manufacturing and mechanical	Transportation and commerce	Trade	Public service	Professions	Domestic and personal	Not specified	None
	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.
State.....	9.3	3.0	34.6	10.4	10.6	.9	2.3	11.1	2.1	15.4
Eleven counties.....	22.0	17.6	18.5	9.9	4.5	.5	1.3	6.7	2.4	16.4
Alexander county.....	20.2	1.2	19.9	14.7	5.0	.6	1.1	18.3	4.7	14.1
Champaign county.....	20.1	.2	21.5	16.0	10.4	1.3	2.1	14.6	1.1	12.7

^aThese classifications are based on those of the 1930 U. S. Census.

justment. Even in June, 1935, when opportunities for farm labor should have been much better than in February of the same year, 21.1 percent of all heads of relief families in four of the eleven counties were designated as ordinarily dependent upon agriculture for a living (Table 19).

TABLE 19.—FORMER OCCUPATIONS OF HEADS OF FAMILIES ON GENERAL RELIEF AND OF THE REST OF THE GENERAL RELIEF POPULATION 16 TO 64 YEARS OLD WHO WERE SEEKING WORK IN FRANKLIN, SCOTT, WHITESIDE, AND WOODFORD COUNTIES IN JUNE, 1935^a

Class	Professions	Farmers	Wholesale and retail dealers	Clerks	Skilled workers	Semi-skilled workers	Farm laborers	Unskilled workers	Service employes	Never worked
	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.	perct.
Heads of relief families.....	.4	11.5	1.5	1.5	5.8	6.6	9.6	55.1	3.5	4.3
Others 16 to 64 years old.....	(b)	(b)	(b)	2.8	.1	3.2	11.1	11.2	6.5	64.1

^aThe classifications of occupations are based upon those of V. M. Sims in "The Measurement of Socio-economic Status," Public School Publishing Co., Bloomington, Ill., 1928. The four counties were selected as samplings of the Corn-Belt and the Appalachian-Ozark areas, according to the divisions of C. C. Zimmerman and N. L. Whetten in "Rural Families on Relief," p. 112, Research Monograph XV11, 1938. Scott, Whiteside, and Woodford counties are in the Corn-Belt area; Franklin is in the Appalachian-Ozark area. ^bLess than 1 percent.

Fertility of land. There is a close relation between high relief rates and poor land. In Alexander and Pope counties, areas of acute agricultural distress, the relationship between relief and soil conditions was striking.

TABLE 20.—INDEXES OF CERTAIN AGRICULTURAL CONDITIONS IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES

County	Relief rate June, 1935 ^a	Number of persons per square mile ^b	Average size of farms ^b	Soil in grades 1 to 5 ^c	Amount of serious soil erosion ^d	Value of farm land per acre ^b	Gross income per farm ^b	Farm population on relief, February, 1935 ^e
	<i>perct.</i>		<i>acres</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>			<i>perct.</i>
Woodford.....	3.1	35.6	165	85.8	9.3	\$104	\$3 359	4.3
Monroe.....	4.3	31.8	152	1 ^f	56.5	44	1 714	3.6
Whiteside.....	6.4	51.5	152	56.6	10.9	74	3 354	7.0
DeKalb.....	7.5	51.2	164	99.6	....	94	4 168	5.6
Mason.....	8.0	27.2	213	37.0	1.5	57	2 885	8.9
Mercer.....	10.0	30.8	173	66.8	23.0	66	3 488	9.0
Champaign.....	10.0	61.6	184	99.2	....	108	4 001	7.7
Montgomery.....	20.2	51.2	135	28.5	18.2	39	1 714	12.1
Pope.....	20.9	20.8	134	2.4	83.6	13	820	12.4
Coles.....	21.0	71.1	133	92.0	9.3	85	2 576	15.8
Scott.....	23.6	34.3	153	49.0	22.5	54	2 419	18.1
Franklin.....	29.4	133.6	85	....	16.0	24	905	17.5
Alexander.....	39.5	99.7	120	....	43.3	27	1 229	40.9

^aThe relief rate for June, 1935, is a good norm for the period studied. The percentage was computed on the basis of the 1930 U. S. Census. ^bFigures were taken from the 1930 U. S. Census. ^cThe grade assigned to a soil by the Illinois Soil Survey, Department of Agronomy, University of Illinois, refers to its producing capacity. The scale used is 1 to 10, with 1 as the most productive soil and 10 as submarginal for grain production. Figures were taken from: "Information Pertaining to Farm, Home and Community, Reports for Farming Type Areas 2, 3, 4A, 4B, 5A, 6, 7C, and 9," mimeo. pub., Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta., 1937. ^dFigures are from same source as indicated in preceding footnote. ^eFigures for the farm relief population were secured from the occupational survey conducted by the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission in February, 1935. The percentage was computed on the basis of the 1930 U. S. Census. ^fIn Monroe county 46.5 percent of the land is grade 7 or better and a large percentage of the population live on this land. The population of the county is largely composed of thrifty German stock who have learned to work the poorer soils.

The thirteen counties included in the study may be arranged in three groups according to relief rates prevailing in June, 1935: (1) the counties with less than 10 percent of their population on relief; (2) those with 10 to 30 percent; and (3) Alexander county, which had almost 40 percent of its population on relief (Table 20). The counties with the lowest relief rates, those below 10 percent, had a higher proportion of the more productive land¹ and much less serious soil erosion than the counties in the second group. In the two groups where the soil was poorest the relief rates were highest. In the second group from two to three times as many persons normally engaged in farming were on relief as in the better areas; in Alexander county the proportion on relief was still higher.

In the hilly section of Alexander county as many as 53.5 percent of all families were dependent in November, 1934. In the more fertile lowlands the number was reduced to 40 percent.² In August, 1936, over 40 percent of the total population in the northern third of Pope county

¹Rating of soil productivity was worked out by the Soils division, Department of Agronomy, College of Agriculture, University of Illinois.

²Lindstrom, D. E., work cited on page 396.

was on relief. Here the hilly land is heavily eroded. In two precincts of this same hilly and eroded section, over 60 percent of the population was on relief. This was a higher rate than existed in the villages.¹ In the poor land areas in Champaign county there were 187 families in the open country on relief at one time in 1934.²

Size of farms. Just as the fertility of the land is closely related to the numbers on relief, so is the size of farms. When the thirteen rural counties are considered in three groups according to the percentage of relief population as described previously, the counties with the lowest relief rates, or those in the first group, had fewer persons per square mile to support and the farms averaged about 50 acres more than those in the counties of the second group.

In Champaign county only 6 renters operating more than 80 acres of land were on relief, while 26 renters operating fewer than 80 acres were on relief. All 8 owners on relief operated less than 13 acres apiece. In Pope county 74 percent of the relief families lived on farms with fewer than 40 acres. No family operating more than 160 acres was on relief. In the poor hilly land areas, however, a number of families were on relief even tho they operated farms ranging from 80 to 160 acres.

Incomes and relief. In general a higher proportion of farm laborers than of operators were on relief (Fig. 7). In three of the counties with low relief rates the percentage of the general relief population that had been farm laborers was higher than the percentage of farm laborers in the total population. The increased use of machines had undoubtedly had considerable effect upon the increase in the number of farm laborers on relief.³ Also the wage rates paid by the Works Progress Administration and other emergency agencies competed with the rates paid laborers because farmers felt that they could not afford to increase wages.

Even when farm laborers were employed they were often forced to seek relief aid because their incomes were too low to provide the necessities of life. A study in Livingston county showed that the average earnings of 223 agricultural workers for a year was a little over \$23 a month.⁴ Many of these laborers had dependents. Twenty-four percent

¹Felder, V. B., and Lindstrom, D. E., Land use and family welfare in Pope county, Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. in coop. with U. S. Dept. of Agr., Div. of Land Econ., Urbana, mimeo., 1939.

²Lindstrom, D. E., and others, Rural social resources survey, Champaign county, Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. in coop. with the Ill. Emergency Relief Commission and the Fed. Emergency Relief Admin., August, 1935, unpublished.

³Smith, R. C., work cited, pp. 178-187.

⁴Vasey, Tom, and Folsom, Josiah C., Survey of agricultural labor conditions: III, Livingston county, Illinois, U. S. Dept. of Agr., 1937.

of these 223 farm laborers reported incomes of more than \$400 a year, but 15 of this number had had their earnings supplemented by work relief wages or by direct relief.

Not only were farm laborers on relief because of low incomes but many farm operators in the thirteen rural counties also had to have aid. In one hill precinct in Pope county 138 families had an average annual gross income of \$277; 29 of these families had an annual gross income of less than \$100. In Union county, where conditions were similar to those in Alexander and Pope, a study of 113 families showed an average annual income of \$549 gross and \$77 net; 20 of these families had a gross income of less than \$200.¹ The 38 most profitable farms in the Union county group netted an average cash income of \$299, while the 38 least profitable farms averaged a loss of \$16.

Social Problems Related to Agricultural Conditions

Relief rates in rural areas were closely associated with poor land, small farms, and low family incomes, as has been shown. Poor agricultural conditions moreover gave rise to adverse situations: low living levels, relatively high illiteracy rates, high rates of infant mortality, few youth over 16 years old in school, poor library service, high rates of juvenile delinquency, and a large proportion of the aged dependent upon public funds (Table 21). Since the state and the nation are both contributing to the alleviation of distress in poor agricultural areas and since these areas contribute youth to other areas, all citizens should be concerned as to how conditions can be improved.

Levels of living. Counties with a low relief rate had higher levels of living than those with high relief rates. The figures indicating these levels of living are based on an index formulated by the Division of Farm Population and Rural Welfare, U. S. Department of Agriculture. They indicate the possession of a certain number of conveniences and luxuries, such as running water, furnace heat, or an automobile. There is a possible range from 0 to 100, an index of 100 indicating the possession of all the things listed. The range in the level of living in the thirteen rural counties was very wide, starting at an index of 3 for Pope county and reaching an index of 95 for Woodford.

Illiteracy. The proportion of illiteracy was almost four times as great in the poorer agricultural areas as in the better ones (Table 21). Since there are so few foreign-born in these counties, the high illiteracy rate is probably a reflection of the lack of opportunity.

¹See Lindstrom, D. E., and Case, H. C. M., Farm incomes and expenditures and costs of family living in the Lick creek area, southern Illinois, 1934, Ill. Agr. Exp. Sta. in coop. with the Ill. Emergency Relief Commission and the Fed. W. P. A., mimeo., 1937.

TABLE 21.—INDEXES OF CERTAIN SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THIRTEEN ILLINOIS RURAL COUNTIES

County	Relief rate June, 1935 ^a	Index of level of living ^b	Illiterates in total population ^c	Infant mortality per 1,000 births ^d	Population 14 to 18 years old not in school ^e	Population with no local library service ^g	Total eligible population receiving old-age assistance ^f	Boys and girls committed to correctional institutions ^h
	<i>perct.</i>		<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>	<i>perct.</i>
Woodford.....	3.1	95	.9	42.6	11.9	81.4	24.9	.08
Monroe.....	4.3	53	.9	45.2	24.2	81.9	21.5	.53
Whiteside.....	6.4	76	.7	55.1	15.3	56.2	25.5	.12
DeKalb.....	7.5	90	1.6	43.2	6.4	47.4	23.2	.30
Mason.....	8.0	66	1.1	53.5	7.7	64.3	43.0	1.39
Mercer.....	10.0	83	.6	51.4	11.8	86.4	34.7	.18
Champaign.....	10.0	71	.8	53.9	7.1	44.9	30.9	.23
Montgomery.....	20.2	39	1.6	55.2	13.6	68.7	31.4	.37
Pope.....	20.9	3	3.5	85.2	10.1	85.2	71.6	1.12
Coles.....	21.0	43	1.1	66.8	7.8	39.3	46.2	.88
Scott.....	23.6	41	1.8	74.7	8.1	82.1	46.4	.35
Franklin.....	29.4	8	3.6	82.1	7.6	47.9	71.1	.35
Alexander.....	39.5	6	3.8	99.1	13.4	40.0	69.7	1.60

^aThe relief rate for June, 1935, is a good norm for the period studied. The percentage was computed on the basis of the 1930 U. S. Census. ^bFigures indicate the possession of a certain number of conveniences and luxuries, such as running water, furnace heat, or an automobile. There is a possible range from 0 to 100; an index of 100 indicates the possession of all the things listed. Indexes were worked out on the basis of the 1930 U. S. Census by Division of Population and Rural Welfare, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. ^cFigures taken from 1930 U. S. Census. ^dFigures are for 1928-1935. They are taken from Illinois Department of Public Health, Educational Health Cir. 58, p. 6, 1937. ^eReport of the Illinois State Library for 1935. ^fFigures compiled by Old Age Assistance Division, Illinois Department of Public Welfare, for September, 1937. ^gReport of the Children's Division, Illinois Department of Public Welfare for 1931-1934.

Infant mortality. The incidence of physical disability in families on relief was greater in the thirteen rural counties than in the state as a whole, as has already been pointed out. The higher proportion of infant mortality in the poorer counties indicates the need for better medical care. The Federal Social Security Act of August, 1935, which provided for maternal and child health service in rural areas, recognized this need.¹

Youths 14 to 18 years old not in school. In the counties having high relief rates, a somewhat higher proportion of youths between the ages of 14 and 18 were not in school. Children of relief families tended to quit school sooner than others.

Library service. Local library service for rural people was far less developed than the service which the people in towns and cities enjoy. This condition was almost as prevalent in the richer rural counties as in the poorer areas.

Assistance to the aged. From one-third to almost three-fourths of the aged in six of the poor agricultural counties had to depend upon

¹Laws of the United States, Title 42, ch. 7, secs. 701-731.

old-age assistance. In four of the better counties less than one-fourth were receiving old-age assistance.

Commitments to juvenile institutions. A higher proportion of children were sent to correctional institutions from the poorer rural sections than from the richer areas. Since facilities for delinquent children in poorer areas are either inadequate or do not exist at all, many commitments were made which, with better facilities, could have been handled without recourse to the courts. One county judge reported that there was more juvenile delinquency in the rural than in the urban areas of his county. Much is yet to be done to correct the situation. It is first of all important that rural people recognize that there actually are delinquency problems among rural boys and girls.

SUMMARY

Seven types of public home assistance were found in the thirteen Illinois rural counties which are the subject of this study: (1) general aid, provided in all counties; (2) veterans' aid, largely in the form of medical care; (3) blind pensions, paid in all counties when funds were available; (4) mothers' pensions, available in all counties but paid regularly in only a third of them; (5) federal work relief, which absorbed a large part of the relief load; (6) farm grants, available thru the Farm Security Administration; and (7) aid to the aged. Private aid usually supplemented public assistance. Much of the public aid fell short of being effective enough to put the dependent back on the road to self-support or to provide adequate living standards for those unable to work.

The number of cases in eleven of the thirteen rural counties almost doubled and expenditures almost tripled during the period January, 1934, thru June, 1937. At the same time the number of relief clients increased from 14.3 percent of the total population to 19.7 percent. More than 90 percent of the total expenditures was handled by townships, counties, or the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission up to the second half of 1936. During the first six months of 1936 the Works Progress Administration handled 65 percent of the expenditures. In 1937 the work program was handling 45 percent of the load and the old-age assistance program had taken over 25 percent of it.

Per-capita expenditures for all forms of home assistance in the thirteen rural counties ranged from 88 cents in Monroe county for the first half of 1934 to \$22.91 in Alexander county for the first half of 1936, the largest increases during 1934-1937 occurring in the southern counties. The highest monthly expenditure per case was \$46 for work-relief wages and the lowest was \$2.73 for private assistance. Mothers' pensions were as low as \$3 a month in many instances.

Fees and wages for elected officials made up a large part of the costs of administering assistance until after July, 1936. At this time the limit for recompense to officials was set at 5 percent of the total administration costs.

Relief was often administered by local officials elected regardless of their training or experience for this work which took most of their time. Agencies using federal and state funds maintained some standard of qualifications for their personnel and tried to secure welfare workers who had acquired professional recognition. The general trend seems to be toward securing better trained personnel for relief work.

It was often difficult to obtain records of cases from township officials. County records were much more nearly complete. State and federal agencies kept accurate records. Social and family information could be found in the county offices of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission, the Farm Security Administration, and the Division of Old Age Assistance.

The general public seemed to be little concerned about relief administration. Attendance at town meetings was lax when the poor levy was to be voted, and little interest was shown in the selection of qualified personnel and in provision for adequate financing.

People on relief in the thirteen rural counties of Illinois were predominantly native-born whites. They had less schooling, on an average, than people on relief in urban areas and less than those not on relief in the rural areas.

A larger proportion of large families and more people beyond the age of 65 were in need of relief in rural areas than in urban areas. The large number of aged and the higher incidence of physical disability were partly responsible for the larger proportion of unemployables in rural areas.

About 25 percent of the experienced employable persons on relief in the eleven rural counties reported their usual occupation as farming, whereas the state average was about 10 percent. Approximately one-third of all employed persons in the eleven counties were engaged in farming; 22 percent of those over 16 years of age on relief reported their former occupation as farming. In the thirteen rural counties those counties having the lower relief rates had fewer persons per square mile, better land and more acres per farm, a lower proportion of soil erosion, higher incomes, and fewer tenants and farm laborers on relief. Poorer agricultural areas had higher relief rates, lower levels of living, more illiteracy, a greater amount of infant mortality, and a larger percentage of the aged dependent upon public assistance.

Rural families on relief are at a disadvantage because they have had fewer years of schooling and have a greater incidence of ill health than either urban relief families or rural families not on relief. Most of the rural relief clients are unskilled laborers in small towns and

villages or farm hands or tenants on poor land. They present a social problem requiring as much, or perhaps more, study than that of urban relief and also a personnel as capable of handling it. Planning and administration must be especially adapted to rural areas. The following principles are outlined in the hope that they will help guide in the development of a more effective system of relief in rural areas.

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPING BETTER RELIEF ADMINISTRATION

Administration of relief in rural areas must be so coordinated as to prevent unnecessary duplication, assure the efficiency required to help employable dependents become self-supporting, and provide all unemployables on relief with a decent standard of living.

It is not easy to find solutions for all the problems involved in handling rural relief. Both economic and social conditions differ in rural and urban areas just as they differ from one section of the state to another. In rural areas adverse economic conditions are closely related to low fertility of land, small farms, insufficient returns for labor, and lack of work opportunities. Family life in rural areas is more closely knit than it is in urban areas. Levels of living are not the same. Facilities for child care are not so adequate. Professional help for the care of health, aid in the prevention and handling of delinquency, and guidance in personal and family adjustment are usually not so adequate in rural areas as in the cities.

It is a matter of common observation that once an individual has been forced to accept public aid in which he finds security even with low standards of living, he often needs more than higher wages in private enterprise to induce him to become self-supporting again. He needs an outlook for the future and a degree of security approaching that offered by regular relief allowances. His readjustment should be accompanied by educational programs that will rekindle his initiative, rehabilitate his skills, and recreate his self-respect. Greater attention to the development of an educational program in connection with the administration of relief, would, it seems clear, be far less costly than maintaining the existing poorly integrated system which too often provides only for present subsistence and fails to look to the future.

Any system of relief administration that is composed of national, state, and local units must of necessity encompass both rural and urban needs. Since rural areas must be protected against unwise or ill-adapted administration in such a system, a definite share in the making of policies and the expending of funds should be borne by each community. Representatives of each community participating should certainly be chosen on a nonpartisan basis. To insure effective adminis-

tration the communities might well be formed into larger units, as county boards or committees.

The county board or committee would be the means of coordinating all forms of public aid on a county basis by acting as the administrative board of a central welfare agency. If the categorical system of administration is retained, all categories should clear thru this county unit.

Only trained persons should administer relief. Those working in rural areas must understand rural people and their particular problems. They should be responsible to the policy-making officials but free from political influence.

In order to keep the members of the county board or committee in close touch with the professional staff, complete and accurate records are necessary. Detailed financial accounts should be kept by all those handling funds, and these accounts should be gone over periodically by competent and responsible auditors. Social and family information for every case must be kept up to date.

Funds for financing a relief program cannot in all areas come wholly from local sources, but no area should be absolved of all financial responsibility for its relief program. The state should be called upon to supplement local funds only when the local agency has provided an amount commensurate with its ability to contribute. Altho the care of dependents is the responsibility of the whole of society, citizens in every local unit must be induced to take an interest in the work and to realize their responsibility.

Private charities should of course be encouraged, but their activities should be coordinated with those of the county welfare agency so that unnecessary duplication will be avoided and dependents who should be helped will not be neglected.

The principles just described are in partial operation in some counties of the state at the present time. To incorporate all of them into the system of relief administration in Illinois may require some reforms in legislation and considerable reorganization in community and county relief units. Such changes would be designed primarily to bring together into a single responsible administration the work of county and local units that are now independent, and to give to the state advisory and limited supervisory authority over the county units.

Certainly the problems of relief merit the continued and active interest of all citizens, to the end that a system of administration can be developed which will meet depression demands and also assure the necessary adjustments when economic conditions improve.

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