THE ARKLETON TRUST

RURAL POVERTY AND DEPRIVATION IN EUROPE - FROM ANALYSIS TO ACTION

Report of a seminar held in Scotland from 7 to 11 October 1990

by

James Hunter

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THE ARKLETON TRUST uses its resources for the study of new approaches to rural development with emphasis on education and.trainingg It aims to promote dialogue between politicians, administrators and practitioners at all levels on the problems of Europe and the Third World.

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ISBN 0 90 6724-40-6

PREFACE

The purpose of Arkleton Seminars is to have a real exchange of views between people from different backgrounds and countries on a subject of particular importance for rural development. We in the Trust try our best to bringtogether people who have policy, research and practical backgrounds in relation to the subject matter under consideration.

The subject of this year's seminar - Rural Poverty and Deprivation in Europe: From Analysis to Action - was originally suggested by the participants at the 1989 seminar. Given the growing interest in "cohesion" within Europe the issue of which groups are disadvantaged by the development process at this time of rapid restructuring is one of considerable significance.

No formal papers were presented at the seminar and neither is this report a formal statement of the discussion or its conclusions. Rather, Dr Jim Hunter was asked to compile a report which would give some flavour of the discussion and of the conclusions reached.

It was not the purpose of the seminar to draw up charters or long lists of recommendations for the responsible authorities, but we nevertheless feel that the report will be of general interest. We would hope that it will also be of some value, both in relation to the specific issue of poverty and deprivation and in demonstrating the value of the Arkleton Seminar approach.

The latter is perhaps best illustrated by the following extract from an unsolicited letter from one of the seminar participants:

> ... "Nor can I offer any "resounding conclusion", at least of a substantive nature. I feel that the problems we identified do not suggest a specific solution, but we are still at the point where a variety of approaches are required.
>
> Under such conditions, the type of meeting which The Arkleton Trust has provided becomes extremely important. It provided an opportunity for people in a variety of situations to exchange information regarding their experiences and approaches. For me, this has been the major "conclusion" of the seminar. I was able to hear and explore what other people were doing about the issues which concerned

me. It has provided me with fresh ideas, new contacts, and renewed motivation for dealing with the rural problems in Canada."

We are grateful to Jim Hunter for the contribution he made to the seminar as well as to his work in preparing this report, which included circulating earlier drafts to participants and taking into account their comments. We are also grateful to the participants for responding to this process!

All the participants in the seminar were enormously appreciative of the patience and skill applied to the proceedings by the Chairman, Declan Walton.

We are as ever grateful to the MacRobert Trust for the facilities and comfort which they provided and which undoubtedly oiled the wheels of our deliberations.

A seminar is only as good as its participants. The participants at this seminar were excellent.

Elizabeth Higgs
Chairman

and

Dr John M Bryden
Programme Director

LIST OF SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

Mr James Armstrong,	Rural Action Project, 10 Shipquay Street, Derry, Northern Ireland.
The Rev'd James Barnett,	Tresillian Rectory, Truro, Cornwall, TR2 4AA.
Mr Joe Belden,	Housing Assistance Council, 1025 Vermont N.W., Suite 606, Washington D.C. 20005, USA.
Dr Bronwen Cohen,	Scottish Child & Family Alliance, 55 Albany Street, Edinburgh, EH1 3QY.
Mme. Françoise Coulmin,	Federation Nationale de l'Habitat Rural et de l'Amenagement du Territoire Rural, 27 rue de la Rochefoucauld, 75009 Paris, France.
M. Pierre Coulmin,	Federation Nationale de l'Habitat Rural et de l'Amenagement du Territoire Rural, 27 rue de la Rochefoucauld, 75009 Paris, France.
Mrs Agnes Gannon,	FAO/REUR, Via delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy.
Dr James Hunter,	2 Camustianavaig, Braes, Isle of Skye.

Sister Stanislaus Kennedy,	Focus Point, (Resource Centre for Homeless People), 15 Eustace Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.
Mr Brian McLaughlin,	National Farmers' Union, Agriculture House, Knightsbridge, London, SW1X 7NJ.
Professor José Portela,	D.E.S., U.T.A.D., 5000 Vila Real, Portugal.
Mr Bill Reimer,	Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Concordia University, 1455 boulevard de Maisonneuve O., Montreal, Quebec, Canada. H3G 1M8
Dr Mark Shucksmith,	Department of Land Economy, University of Aberdeen, Old Aberdeen, AB9 2UF.
Dr Richard Struff,	Forschungsgesellschaft für Agrarpolitik und Agrarsoziologie E.V., D-5000 Bonn 1, Meckenheimer Allee 125, Germany.
Mrs Helen Thomson,	Rural Development Commission, 11 Cowley Street, London, SW1P 3NA.
Mr Declan Walton,	Oliveto, 52024 Loro Ciuffenna (AR), Italy.

The Arkleton Trust,

Lady Higgs,
Chairman of the Trustees.
Dr John Bryden,
Programme Director.
Ms Christine Gillam,
Administrator.

Contents

We were not poor. But all of us had been required to deal with, and think about, both the causes and consequences of poverty. Among us were people who had worked with the homeless; people who had helped organise welfare and housing programmes; people on the staffs of national and international development agencies; people who had studied, analysed and reported on the economic and social factors and forces which result in so many men, women and children being deprived of the capacity to make the most of their lives.

We were a diverse group. We came from Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic, France, Germany, Portugal, the United States and Canada. And our areas of professional expertise included economics, sociology, the law, administration, agriculture, pressure group activity, political lobbying, the church and journalism.

Each of us, in the course of our discussions, naturally tended to make particular reference to our own country, our own particular range of experience. And this was as it should have

We were a diverse group. We came from Scotland, England,

action on the problems of the poor is a general recognition, on the part both of governments and the peoples they represent, that poverty, insofar as it deprives its victims of the freedom to live their lives in their own way, is every bit as unacceptable, in a just society, as slavery, forced labour or imprisonment without trial.

It was not for us, we felt, to give concrete form to that moral imperative. But it might be for the Arkleton Trust, at a later date, to take the initiative in calling a more representative gathering with a view to considering what might be required, by way of a more widely debated declaration or charter, in order to establish

the terrifyingly dramatic effect achieved by participants in inner city riots.

> The extent to which deprivation can be said to occur in rural areas of the United Kingdom in the latter half of the twentieth century is ... difficult to establish. In addition to the theoretical and methodological problems of defining and measuring deprivation, there is the problem of trying to do so in a context where the prevailing imagery makes it impossible for many to accept that the two concepts of *rural* and *deprivation* can or should be related in any way ... On the one hand, change and decay in many of our cities has produced a catalogue of poor social conditions characterised by bad housing, derelict factory buildings, visible unemployment and all the social malaise that we come to associate with these conditions ... By contrast, the rural condition has continued to be represented by images of wellbeing and affluence.
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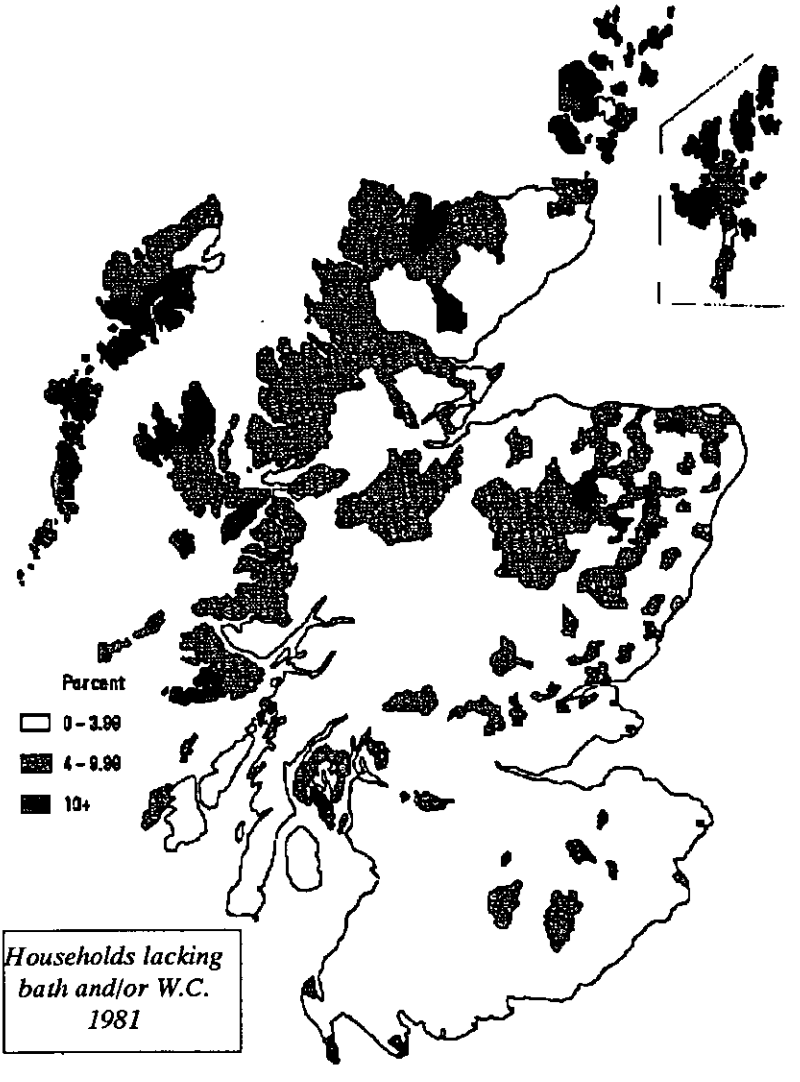
> Brian McLaughlin, *Popular Images and the Reality of Deprivation in Rural Areas*, Arkleton Trust, Oxford, 1990, pp 1-2.



Mark Shucksmith, *The Definition of Rural Areas and Rural Deprivation,* Scottish Homes, Edinburgh, 1990

But there is poverty in the countryside also. One North American participant in our seminar, Joe Belden of the Washington based Housing Assistance Council, brought with him a map which his agency had prepared to demonstrate the spatial distribution of general economic and social disadvantage right across the United States. That map showed that poverty in the US, if measured on a county for county basis, is an overwhelmingly rural phenomenon. And though the available data do not make it possible to conduct a similar mapping exercise on this side of the Atlantic, we were in no doubt as to the extent of deprivation in our own countryside.

The view from Douneside House in Aberdeenshire, where our seminar was held, is one of well cultivated fields, of mature woodland, of heather covered hills and substantial farms. There is nothing in the appearance of that landscape to suggest anything other than the tranquil, undeniably beautiful Scottish countryside of the tourist brochure.

But another seminar participant, Mark Shucksmith of Aberdeen University, had recently completed a report which showed that a locality can easily be both scenically attractive and socially and economically disadvantaged. Mark's report, which he prepared for Scottish Homes, a government funded housing agency, contains a map showing the distribution of those households in Scotland which, at the time of the 1981 census, lacked basic internal sanitary facilities. The communities with the highest proportion of such households were all in rural areas.

> Rural deprivation is a complex and neglected phenomenon. Depravation is generally thought of as a predominantly urban phenomenon, and studies of multiple deprivation (such as overcrowding, lack of a car and multistorey dwelling) have, not surprisingly, shown the incidence of deprivation to be greatest in urban areas. These studies, however, have been interpreted in misleading ways, and have concealed the existence of large numbers of disadvantaged households in rural locations.
>
> Mark Shucksmith, *The Definition of Rural Areas and Rural Deprivation*, Scottish Homes, Edinburgh, 1990, piii.

UNDERSTANDING POVERTY

We were concerned with poverty and deprivation in Europe. We made some mention of Eastern Europe which one seminar participant, Agnes Gannon of FAO, had recently visited. We noted the possible impact of Eastern European food exports on the agricultural economies of Western Europe. And we recognised the urgent need for organisations like the Arkleton Trust to become involved in discussion about ways of coping with the particular problems of those Eastern European rural and agricultural communities which are currently attempting to make the transition from communist to capitalist modes of life. But we felt unable, at this stage, to do more than signal our concern for developments in the eastern part of the continent; our more immediate business, we agreed, was with the European Community.

If the poor are defined as those whose incomes are less than half the national average income of the country in which they live, said our chairman, Declan Walton, reporting on his preparatory reading of the relevant European Commission documentation, then poverty in the EC is increasing. In the 12 member states of the EC in 1985, 44 million people (out of a total population of some 315 million) had annual incomes equivalent to less than 50 per cent of their respective national average. And this figure had risen by some 15 per cent in the course of the preceding 10 years.

A number of regions of Northern Europe which were heavily dependent on older manufacturing industries have become unemployment black spots with dramatic falls in standards of living. Similarly, in some of the declining cities there are areas with high rates of deprivation. However, the heaviest concentrations of poverty are probably still to be found in the rural areas of those member states which are least developed. These areas have generally always been poor but whereas in the past this poverty did not lead to a feeling of social alienation in the growth of affluent urban living within these same countries is creating a growing contrast by establishing a lifestyle from which the rural population are increasingly aware of being excluded.

Social Europe, Supplement 2/89, Commission of the European Communities.

Why, in your opinion, are there people who live in need? Here are four opinions. Which is closest to yours?

Because they have been unlucky	18
Because of laziness and lack of willpower	17
Because there is much injustice in our society	32
It is an inevitable part of modern progress	17
None of these	7

Eurobarometer; *The Perception of Poverty in Europe,* Report of a survey conducted on behalf of the Directorate General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs of the Commission of the European Communities, March 1990.

No distinction is made in such EC statistics between urban areas and the countryside. But the European Commission was of the opinion, Declan commented, that the greatest concentrations of poverty were to be found in the more rural parts of those EC member states with the least developed economies - that is, Portugal, Spain, Southern Italy and Greece.

We wasted little time on what precisely is meant by "rural" in this context. But we were more anxious to define "poverty" a little more closely. Definitions which dealt only in income levels, we felt, were not sufficient.

In connection with the European Community Programme to Combat Poverty, said Declan, the EC Council of Ministers had made the following statement: "The poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live."

And this, we agreed, is an acceptable starting point for any discussion of poverty and deprivation; for it conveys something of the sense in which poverty has to be understood in terms other than the purely financial; terms which denote the extent to which to be poor or deprived is to be denied opportunities with regard to education, employment and much else which are taken for granted by the more affluent.

It was in this respect that we saw some distinction between the urban and rural experience in respect of poverty. The underlying reasons as to why a family lacks income might not differ fundamentally as between town and country. But the deprivation consequent on that poverty might well be greater in a rural than in an urban setting in that the poor are likely to have less ready access to basic services in the former location than in the latter.

The deregulation of transport services in both the US and Canada, remarked the two North American participants in our seminar, Joe Belden and Bill Reimer, had resulted in bus and train services to many rural communities being cut. And though the European experience was generally less extreme in this regard, the same phenomenon was observable in a number of EC countries with a consequently adverse impact on low income families who, in the absence of adequate public transport, are liable to be cut off from shops, post offices, banks and other services which are themselves being centralised in larger centres.

Our concept of poverty, then, was one which, while it began with income, did not end with simple measurements of money or the absence of it. Rather we tended to concentrate increasingly on the notion of poverty as a condition resulting in the limiting of the poor person's chances to make the best of his or her life. And one's choices and opportunities could be narrowed, we agreed, by the unavailability of transport services, for example, as well as by a simple scarcity of cash. To be physically isolated from retail outlets and leisure facilities is clearly to be deprived; and to the extent that such isolation is more likely to occur in the countryside than in the city, it is easy to understand why so much discussion as to the nature of rural deprivation tends to focus on the service issue.

At this point, however, two seminar participants, Mark Shucksmith and Brian McLaughlin, struck a cautionary note. There were undoubted difficulties in the way of providing rural areas with services of the type which are common in towns, Mark conceded. These difficulties stemmed from the higher

costs and lower returns inescapably associated with supplying comparatively small, and often widely dispersed, populations. And they had been aggravated by deregulation.

But it was not sufficient, Mark felt, to analyse rural deprivation solely in such terms. It was also necessary, he believed, to examine the structure of rural society itself and, in particular, to be aware of the extent to which that structure contained both social inequality and conflicting economic interest.

Brian agreed. He had made a particular study of rural deprivation in England in the early 1980s. And he had been impressed by the extent to which it was politically convenient for local authorities, for example, to define rural deprivation almost entirely in terms of the withdrawal of transport services and the closure of shops, post offices and schools. Such an approach made it possible to argue that some essentially extraneous

> Poverty does not mean merely that poor people have at their disposal fewer material resources than do the average citizens of their respective societies, but also that they have fewer opportunities in all areas of social life: employment, education and training, housing, cultural life. Thus poverty means not only economic and social disadvantage, but also in many cases social exclusion, discrimination and stigmatisation. The combined effects of these factors are the cause of the often-observed phenomnon of poverty becoming a way of life ... For these reasons, an effective campaign against poverty must start from the total life situation of poor people, and from an awareness that it is only by effecting thoroughgoing changes in the entire social context in which poor people live that we can eliminate the poverty which already exists and stop the proliferation of new cases of poverty. Thus the struggle against poverty cannot be limited to mere charitable assistance to poor individuals, for although this approach does relieve urgent distress, it does not arrest the process that leads repeatedly to the genesis of poverty in its varied forms. Instead, measures are needed that alter the basic structures.
>
> Wilhelm Breuer, "On the Role of Information in the Struggle against Poverty", *Exchange: Information Service for the Programme of the European Communities to Combat Poverty*, October, 1989.

agency, such as central government, was largely responsible for what was happening; it avoided the need to come to grips with those internal inequalities and conflicts which Mark had mentioned; and, last but certainly not least, it provided local authorities with arguments which could usefully be deployed in support of their contention that they required more, not less, in the way of financial resources from the national exchequer.

The basic causes of rural poverty, Mark and Brian contended, would not be removed by improving bus services. It had to be recognised that the rural poor were frequently disadvantaged in relation to other, more affluent and more powerful, rural residents. And the interests of the latter group might easily run counter to those of the poor; with wealthy incomers to a village, for instance, resisting the building of low cost homes or the construction of a factory on the grounds that such developments might detract from the locality's visual appearance or result in a reduction in property values.

Nor was it uncommon for those opposing all such changes to be disproportionately represented on local authorities and other locally elected bodies where articulate, comparatively affluent residents tended to exercise a good deal more political influence than the poorer, less well organised people who might well benefit financially from changes of the sort that better off residents almost invariably opposed.

> Many rural communities have inadequate social facilities and this leads to a feeling of family isolation. Often there are not opportunities for different groups to get together, particularly in the remoter rural areas. Many communities lack a youth club, and there is little for young people to do in their spare time. There is no cinema, theatre, art gallery or opportunity to hear live music, which leads to a poverty of cultural experience.
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> Sara Mason and Rhys Taylor, *Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas: A Report for the Calouste Gaulbenkian Foundation*, ACRE, Cirencester, 1990, p15.

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Sara Mason and Rhys Taylor, *Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas: A Report for the Calouste Gaulbenkian Foundation,* ACRE, Cirencester, 1990, p15.

Collectively, we did not dissent from the proposition that rural communities cannot be considered as socially homogeneous identities. Nor did we deny the possibility that an undue concentration on service provision, or the absence of it, might serve to detract attention from more contentious causes of rural deprivation. But we were nevertheless reluctant to lose sight of the service issue.

The deterioration in rural services had a twofold impact on communities, commented John Bryden, research director of the Arkleton Trust. It was depriving communities of access to a wide range of important facilities. And it was depriving the same communities of employment opportunities.

Service jobs are particularly important in the rural context, John continued. And the threat to services is also a threat to particular types of work. Fewer country buses mean fewer jobs for country bus drivers. Fewer rural primary schools mean fewer country posts for teachers.

More fundamentally, John discerned in these trends some evidence of very basic changes in the wider role of the state. Facilities such as rural schools, he pointed out, had not come into existence of their own volition. They had been provided by governments which had been consciously attempting to strengthen the social and cultural cohesion of the states they ruled; governments which had been committed to interventionist policies designed to reinforce the national allegiances of their citizens.

A school established in a remote rural locality had served to link that locality more firmly with the centres of national and political power. And there had been times in the not too distant past when it had been constitutionally, even militarily, important to emphasise just such connections.

But currently prevailing political ideologies, John went on, were having the opposite effect. Most obviously in countries like the United States and Britain, but to some extent elsewhere also, governments were seeking to extricate themselves from involvements previously considered more or less obligatory.

Services and utilities were being privatised with potentially adverse implications for rural localities where private sector managers were much less likely than their public sector predecessors to resort to policies of cross subsidisation in order to ensure, for example, that rural electricity supplies remained on a par with those available in town. And this deliberate withdrawal on the part of the state was being accompanied by a clear insistence that country localities must accept more responsibility for their own service provision, their own economic development. Hence the very prevalent political commitment to those types of rural initiative which relied financially and organisationally on the self help approach.

Many village communities still have a primary school but often this has closed due to falling school rolls. When a primary school closes it often affects the entire community as the school building was used by different village groups after school hours and at holiday times. If children have to go to a school in a neighbouring town or village they often miss out on all the afterschool activities which take place at the school - music, drama, sports - as they have to catch the school bus if their parents have no access to a car or suitably timed public transport.

Sara Mason and Rhys Taylor, *Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas: A Report for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation,* ACRE, Cirencester, 1990, p13.

Work done by The Arkleton Trust (Research) Ltd on a sample of over 6,000 farm households in nine EC countries suggested that nearly 30 per cent were vulnerable to declines in agricultural incomes. These vulnerable groups are mainly found on small farms in areas where alternative jobs outside farming for the members of the farm household are few and far between. They are concentrated in Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, where farming still accounts for a high proportion of rural jobs. They suffer the double disadvantage of small farm income and lack of opportunities to take off-farm work. The result is emigration, closure of family farms, ageing population and, in some cases, environmental degradation.

The Arkleton Trust (Research) Ltd, *Rural Change in Europe, Research Programme on Farm Structures and Household Pluriactivity*, Second Report to the EC Commission, 1990

RURAL LABOUR MARKETS

In raising the question of the relationship between the loss of rural services and rural unemployment, John Bryden touched upon the wider issue of the extent to which poverty in the countryside is a function of the rural labour market. If jobs are difficult to obtain, or if such jobs as do exist are poorly paid, then poverty will inevitably be more prevalent than will be the case in less circumscribed conditions.

That much was clear enough. What was more difficult to ascertain, in view of the absence of adequate statistical information and the enormously wide range of circumstances encountered in the very large geographical area under discussion, was

Although new jobs are being created in some rural areas, the lack of job choices and low pay means an out-migration, particularly of young people. Even where jobs are available, employers often prefer to bring in skilled labour from elsewhere rather than train up local people. The lack of all kinds of training facilities in rural areas is universal. There are particularly few job opportunities for women.
Sara Mason and Rhys Taylor, *Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas: A Report for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation*, ACRE, Cirencester, 1990, p12.

> We must also recognise that many of the problems facing people in rural areas derives from the fact that it is a low paid economy.
>
> Brian McLaughlin, *Popular Images and the Reality of Deprivation in Rural Areas*, Arkleton Trust, Oxford, 1990, p35.

the exact nature of the rural labour market in the European Community as a whole. But John Bryden was prepared to offer some pointers.

Employment in primary industries, on which country communities traditionally relied, is everywhere declining. And not only are jobs being lost in farming; agricultural and timber processing are also becoming notably less labour intensive.

The rural economy is characterised by a comparative absence of high technology businesses of the sort which are providing comparatively well paid work in many urban locations.

Most country areas, as already indicated, are disproportionately dependent on service industry. And rural service jobs in tourism, for example are all too frequently associated with low wages and unattractive conditions.

Female participation in the labour market tends to be significantly lower in rural localities than is the case in towns and cities though there is evidence, from the UK at least, to the effect that levels of female employment participation are now rising fairly rapidly in some country localities.

And though many hopes were pinned, by the European Commission among others, on the potentially beneficial impact on country communities of modern communications technologies which, so it was widely thought, would enable rural localities to overcome many of the problems traditionally associated with their remoteness from urban centres, there is now some evidence that these expectations were exaggerated. Modern telecommunications facilities and computer links may even be contributing to the further centralisation of services such as banking.

Low-cost housing, to buy or rent, is vital if people working locally are to be able to stay in the area. In most rural areas there is a serious lack of rented and "starter" homes for young people or first-time buyers, and planning controls often restrict the number and type of houses that can be built to favour the larger and low-density types. The influx of retired people, commuters and second-home owners means that the price of many homes in rural areas is now beyond the means of those locally born and brought up. Existing accommodation is being adapted to meet demand rather than need, and the market is dominated by urban escapees with capital to invest. Social consequences are considerable.

Sara Mason and Rhys Taylor, *Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas: A Report for the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation*, ACRE, Cirencester, 1990, p12.

HOUSING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

An adequate home is as essential a component of a reasonable living standard as is a worthwhile job. But in much of North America and the European Community, the seminar concluded, rural poverty remains firmly linked with housing of a markedly inferior quality. In Scotland, as already mentioned, Mark Shucksmith's researches on behalf of Scottish Homes have demonstrated that the proportion of poor housing is highest in the remoter parts of the countryside. And those same areas, Mark told the seminar, were also the places where the overall proportion of Below Tolerable Standard housing, as defined by British governments, was falling at the slowest rate.

Much the same was true of Northern Ireland, said James Armstrong of the province's Rural Action Project. In some rural localities, he continued, as many as 40 per cent of all homes were substandard.

Definitions of what it is that constitutes poor quality housing naturally vary internationally. But from Agnes Gannon, Joe Belden, Jose Portela and Pierre Coulmin there was confirmation that in the Irish Republic, the US, Portugal and France many country districts continue to be characterised by comparatively large numbers of homes in which basic amenities are completely lacking.

French governments, remarked Pierre, had accepted some responsibility for housing provision in the course of the last half century. But the overwhelming majority of the new homes built by the state agencies were in towns and cities. Country communities had benefited very little.

The same tendency for public sector housing to be concentrated in urban areas is observable in the United Kingdom. And since the present British government is strongly promoting the sale of local authority homes to their occupiers, the already inadequate amount of public sector housing in the UK countryside has been falling still further adding to the problems resulting from a marked decline in the availability of other forms of property for rent.

In such circumstances, stressed Brian McLaughlin, the quality of rural housing may easily become a much less pressing matter than the difficulty which poorer families experience in gaining access to housing of any type as rented accommodation becomes ever scarcer and as property prices rise steeply in response to the demand generated by relatively prosperous people moving out of town.

Although media coverage of British and more particularly English rural housing issues, has tended to focus on soaring purchase prices, both Brian and Mark Shucksmith were inclined to be more concerned about the continuing contraction of the rented sector.

In the past, commented Mark, less affluent families in both town and country had generally lived in homes rented from private landlords. Such homes were now extremely few and far between. But the urban poor had at least been able to look to local authority housing departments to take the place of the private landlord. The rúral poor, for the most part, had not even had that option.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

And so we began to see something of the dimensions of poverty and deprivation in the European countryside. The unavailability of affordable housing is one aspect of it. The prevalence of unemployment, under employment and low wages in many of the EC's rural areas is another. And all such problems are being aggravated by the mounting difficulties in the way of obtaining access to basic services.

Service centralisation can occur for many reasons: declining financial returns in the retail trade; the withdrawal or curtailment of public subsidy; the sincere belief, on the part of administrators, that certain services, notably in the health and education sectors, are best provided in centres large enough to sustain a larger range of facilities than could be offered in a smaller community. But irrespective of its causes, the consequences of such centralisation are everywhere the same: life is made more difficult for the rural poor.

In a study organised in one part of the French countryside, said Pierre Coulmin, it had been shown that there was a high degree of correlation between a person's income and that person's "area of movement". Wealthier rural residents are much more mobile than those who are poorer. They can easily travel to comparatively distant towns to take advantage of urban facilities. But the poor can much less readily make such journeys. They are consequently much more adversely affected by the growing lack of local services.

French experience, Pierre continued, also suggested that children obliged to travel long distances to school performed less satisfactorily as a result. In Normandy, for example, it had been shown that children who did well in their local primary school often did much less well when transferred to a secondary school in an urban area.

And commenting on these findings, Bronwen Cohen of the Scottish Child and Family Alliance made the point that to move children out of their home environment, quite apart from its purely educational repercussions, was to make it less likely that they would aspire to take up residence in the rural communities to which they belonged.

In the least developed parts of the EC, indicated Jose Portela, the poor had simply failed to obtain an adequate education of any kind. Studies in some of the more rural areas of Portugal had shown that many people, perhaps as many as 50 per cent of working adults, had entered the labour market before the age of 10.

And if education and training were not sufficiently available to the poor, neither was social welfare. The difficulties experienced by Germany in adapting its social security system in order to cope with changing needs were explained to the seminar by Richard Struff. And other seminar participants were equally insistent on the need for much more flexibility and sensitivity in the welfare field.

In Britain at least, remarked Bronwen Cohen, there was now a greater recognition of the particular difficulties confronting the elderly particularly those older women who constituted one of the most obviously disadvantaged groups in many rural communities. But much less had been done to take account of the needs of women who were bringing up families. And the almost insuperable problems which such women frequently encountered in getting access to properly organised child care facilities was one obvious reason for the low level of female participation in the rural labour market.

COMBATING POVERTY

Our seminar had so far been concerned primarily with explaining the predicament of the poor; for to have some understanding of poverty is a prerequisite to action of a kind which will contribute to its alleviation. But now, said Declan Walton, it was necessary for us to begin to move a little bit beyond the analytical phase of our discussions and to give some consideration as to what has actually to be done to improve the prospects of the poor and the deprived. And he consequently invited Sister Stanislaus Kennedy to give an account of her work as co-ordinator of the various rural projects featured in the European Community's Second Programme to Combat Poverty.

These projects had mainly been located in the more southerly parts of the EC, said Sister Stanislaus. And the people whom they were intended to benefit were often desperately poor.

The typical project had sought to reduce poverty by developing the local economy. The projects had ranged from farm diversification and the improvement of rural infrastructure to alternative, community based initiatives. But the preferred type of project had been one in which local residents themselves took the lead. And a key element in the programme was the effort made to restore a measure of pride and self confidence to communities where these attributes were frequently in short supply.

It had been possible, to varying degrees in different circumstances, to enhance community self esteem while simultaneously promoting a measure of economic and social development. But there remained an urgent need to build up a movement

> Experience shows that economic development is closely connected with the development of all other aspects of community life. This is even more important in view of the decline in the importance of agriculture. It means that it is vital to adopt a wide-ranging but integrated approach to development. Local industrial development should be based on the development of natural resources, small industry and local ownership. Projects should also promote alternative farm enterprises, forestry, fishing and mariculture. In many areas of natural beauty and cultural interest, there is also the potential for alternative forms of tourism. These economic activities should be accompanied by preservation of the natural environment and improvement of the infrastructure, especially roads and telecommunications. Projects should try to improve the living conditions in the community by developing basic services and amenities such as health centres, organised childcare, better schools, personal social services, sports facilities, etc. They should also promote a sense of community and of cultural identity by supporting cultural and artistic activities emphasising local history.
>
> Sister Stanislaus Kennedy, "Integrated Rural Development and Combating Rural Poverty", *Exchange: Information Serive for the Programme of the European Communities to Combat Poverty,* April 1989.

for change.

It was essential, said Sister Stanislaus, to empower people; to explain the causes of their poverty; to demonstrate that practicable steps could be taken to improve their conditions; to create a general feeling that change can be both contemplated and brought about.

Much can be achieved locally by such means, Sister Stanislaus continued. But more is needed. An impoverished rural community cannot solve all its problems by its own unaided efforts. The community needs to construct alliances with others. It has to bring pressure to bear on politicians and administrators. It has to demonstrate both to the nation of which it is a part, and to the wider world, that poverty is wrong; that it is a great injustice for people to be, in effect, deprived of their full rights as European Community citizens by their inability to develop their own talents and to make their own choices as to how they will live.

In initiating a local development project, added Agnes Gannon, it was best to begin with a resource audit and to involve the community directly in the task of assessing its own strengths and weaknesses. Qualities of leadership had to be encouraged and promoted. People had to be taught to take a managerial approach to decision making and problem solving. They had to acquire skills relating to the particular area of economic activity which it was hoped to expand. And they had to develop the attributes needed in order to assess potential markets and to sell their product.

Such an entrepreneurial approach, the seminar agreed, was in accordance with the outlook of most European Community governments. But it was not without its risks and weaknesses.

When funds were made available for locally based development initiatives, commented James Armstrong, there was a tendency for public agencies to channel such funds towards those individuals and groups who seemed best equipped to make the most constructive use of them. This was inevitable. Any agency which was required to show results would naturally attempt to invest scarce financial resources in those projects

which seemed most likely to succeed. But the danger of so doing was that the most disadvantaged elements in rural society might be passed over in favour of those who were somewhat better placed.

There was also a possibility, said Pierre Coulmin, that the benefits of the locally based approach would remain confined to a comparatively small number of communities. The outcome might be described as "leopard skin development". There would be spots where communities were doing relatively well as a result of having attracted funding for particular projects and initiatives. But there would also be large tracts of territory where nothing had been altered.

OBTAINING ACTION

Seminar participants were certainly not averse to the notion that country people ought to be given greater control over their own destinies. There was general agreement that the prospects for development, whether by means of individual or co-operative enterprise, would be considerably enhanced if rural communities were encouraged to set more store on their own cultural traditions, their own heritage, their own ways of doing things. By such means, it was felt, the self esteem of even the most deprived sections of the rural population could be heightened - making it more probable that the poor could be motivated and mobilised to take action on their own behalf.

But the seminar nevertheless responded warmly to a point made by the Rev James Barnett, a Church of England clergyman. There were localities, he said, instancing the particular case of Welsh valleys which had been entirely deprived of their traditional industries, that were so run down, so depressed and

> The fact that no society has succeeded in eradicating poverty should not lead us to regard it fatalistically as something to be "put up with". As soon as we accept that progress must be shared by all and must serve the interests of mankind in general, greater liberty and justice will ensue.
>
> Opinion on Poverty, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, No C221/10, August 1989.

demoralised as to make it impossible for them to be socially and economically regenerated without determined intervention on the part of government.

The self help approach was a good one, we concluded. But it must not be allowed to become the means of permitting governments, and the urban electorates they so overwhelmingly represent in most of the European Community's 12 member states, to absolve themselves of all responsibility for the fate of the rural poor.

Only governments can sanction spending on poverty programmes. Only governments can adopt the measures required to make national social welfare systems more responsive to the particular needs of the less affluent members of our rural communities. Only governments can put in place the wider institutional frameworks within which local development initiatives can be launched successfully. But how are governments to be persuaded to give a sufficiently high priority to the plight of the rural poor?

First of all, we agreed, it would be necessary for the case for action to be substantiated as fully and accurately as possible. Our own discussions had highlighted certain inadequacies in the data relating to rural poverty and deprivation in the European Community. And those inadequacies had to be made good.

But statistical and factual information - whether collected locally, nationally or internationally - has to be deployed politically in order to make the impact needed to produce worthwhile changes in the circumstances of those people to whom the data relates. And the seminar consequently gave some consideration as to how that might be best accomplished.

Drawing on his knowledge of the various means adopted in Washington DC in order to secure implementation of housing policy programmes, Joe Belden made a number of practical suggestions as to the techniques which ought to be adopted in order to get a point of view across to national decision makers.

> In the European Community six to ten million people are directly affected by extreme poverty. This is an intolerable state of affairs.
>
> Opinion on Poverty, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, No C221/10, August 1989.

It is often more productive, Joe commented, to deal with a politician's staff rather than with the politician himself or herself. It is important to ground one's campaign in the locality which the politician represents. It is tactically essential to obtain as many allies and backers from a wide range of interest groups. And it was very helpful, said Joe, reinforcing the seminar's conviction that the collection of hard facts is a necessary prelude to effective action, to know more about the issue at stake than the politicians one was lobbying.

Effective use had to be made of the media, Joe continued. Confrontational stances had to be avoided except in cases of last resort. And the most successful persuader was likely to the one who always wore a tie!

But for all that pressure on behalf of the rural poor was likely to be made more effective if it were exerted by people equipped with all the necessary information and all the equally necessary lobbying skills, the seminar agreed, it was also important to foster a moral climate conducive to the idea that it is simply intolerable to allow people to be poor in a civilised society. And it was in this context that the seminar debated the concept of a charter or declaration designed to give real ethical force to the notion that governments should feel themselves obliged to eradicate poverty and deprivation from the European countryside.

An analogy was drawn with the record of the conservation movement. Environmental concerns had been pushed successfully to the top of the political agenda. Governments increasingly believed themselves compelled to take these concerns very seriously. And, though the issues involved were clearly of a different sort, it was obviously desirable to have governments subjected to a similar moral and political imperative with regard to action on poverty.

It was not for the seminar, we thought, to draw up a charter on rural poverty and deprivation. That was a task for another, much more representative, gathering. But we did not feel ourselves disbarred from making some general suggestions as to what any future charter might contain.

The poor, we were reminded by Declan Walton, had been defined by the EC Council of Ministers as consisting of "persons, families and groups of persons whose resources ... are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live". And in that statement, Declan suggested, was a possible starting point for the anti poverty charter our seminar had in mind such a charter, Declan continued, being ideally intended to make the point that no set of citizens should be so excluded from the benefits inherent in belonging to the democratic societies of which they are an integral part.

Nor would it be tremendously difficult in principle, Declan considered, to identify the essential elements of what would constitute an acceptable minimum basis for life in any one of Europe's rural communities. Indeed a recent survey of EC public opinion on the poverty issue had arguably pointed the way forward by listing, in order of popular priority, a whole series of services and facilities to which, it was clearly felt by survey respondents, people everywhere should have ready access.

All households, it was thought, should be provided with an electricity supply, fresh running water and an indoor toilet. All citizens should be entitled to appropriate and adequate social welfare payments. Everyone should have a right to a reasonable diet, a good education and sufficient accommodation. And both national governments and the EC Commission should have clearly stated responsibilities with regard to all such matters.

IMPACT OF PUBLIC POLICY

The extent to which public opinion supported political and economic action of the kind needed to combat poverty gave the seminar some hope that governments could eventually be persuaded to accept a more active role in relation to the elimination of rural poverty and deprivation. And if governments were to move in this direction, the seminar agreed, it would be important for them to examine the entire range of their policy objectives in order to ascertain the probable impact of these policies on their more disadvantaged citizens.

Just as the European Commission already subjected policy to environmental impact analysis with a view to minimising damage to the natural environment, it was suggested, policy should also be subjected to social impact analysis in order to safeguard and reinforce the equally important social fabric.

Some 60 per cent of total EC spending, John Bryden pointed out, was still devoted to agricultural support of one kind or another. That element of the EC budget was under scrutiny as a result of US pressure - exerted in connection with the Uruguay round of talks on reforms to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) - for substantial cuts in subsidies to European farmers. But it was most improbable that the likely

> There is a certain timelessness about rural areas - the sense that it has always been and always will be. This in itself may be one of the problems that rural community activists are facing. Even the painful haemorrhage of emigration takes place in the media siesta of postpublic holidays and in the ones and twos that seem to inevitably drift away from the farm household or the rural village. There is the consolation that they are going off to "better themselves" and so little is made of it. But for the future of rural communities it represents a seepage, not only of youth but of hope. The resulting fear of slow community decline is a constant spur to those who see as their aim rural development and survival. The danger is that the lack of drama connected with rural decline limits the public attention, resources and official conern, that rural communities warrant.
>
> *Rural Development; A Challenge for the 1990s*, Rural Action Project, Londonderry, 1989, p52.

WASHINGTON, July 5 - After considering a variety of ambitious options, the Bush Administration has decided against proposing any major new program or strategy to combat poverty at this time, Administration officials said today. An interagency group, convened last year by a senior adviser to President Bush to rethink the nation's antipoverty efforts, came up with a dozen broad alternatives. But in meetings over the last two weeks, a higher-ranking group, the President's Domestic Policy Council, decided that the options were too expensive or would stir up too much political controversy. The council, a Cabinet-level advisory body, concluded that the Administration should simply try to make current programs work better. A White House official summarized the upshot this way: "Keep playing with the same toys. But let's paint them a little shinier."

New York Times, July 6, 1990.

impact of agricultural support spending changes on the more seriously disadvantaged parts of the European countryside would figure prominently in the political debates engendered by the US call for substantial cuts in the overall level of EC farming subsidy.

A social impact analysis requirement would help make good this obvious weakness in the decision making process at the EC level, the seminar agreed; just as a similar requirement at the national government level would make it more difficult for EC member state administrations to avoid having to make proper provision for the poor when embarking on changes in policy for welfare, education and other matters.

But if rural poverty and deprivation, in particular, were to be tackled effectively, the seminar concluded, it would not be sufficient for governments simply to demonstrate a greater general awareness of the needs of the poor; it would also be necessary for governments to consider entirely new rural policy initiatives.

In the field of child care, suggested Bronwen Cohen, governments ought no longer to be content with simply imposing on rural communities those patterns of provision which had all too clearly been devised in an urban context. It was easy for the

authorities to assume that because day centres were expensive to construct in the countryside, and because rural residents were frequently considered - often wrongly - to be particularly friendly and helpful in their outlook, child care could be made the responsibility of child minders. But it might actually be difficult, in a small and remote community, for a parent to develop the appropriate relationship with a childminder, particularly in the absence of any effective mediating agency - and in the absence of training for the childminders themselves.

One possible approach would be to make more imaginative use of those facilities which do exist in rural communities. For example, primary schools might provide a much wider range of services such as pre-school and school-age childcare - which would both mitigate the difficulties confronting rural families and enhance the viability of schools which could otherwise face closure.

And while it was important for governments to ensure that education was readily available to country communities, the seminar agreed, it was equally essential for the content of the rural school syllabus to be such as to assist the younger members of those communities to develop the capabilities and attributes which would be required if rural localities were to be made more successful economically.

This is not simply a matter of providing training in appropriate practical skills, though they are obviously of great relevance in this connection; it is inextricably bound up with the need to enhance the community's image of itself; to validate its culture, its local language or dialect; to assist the emergence of that self assuredness which is the key to enterprise.

CONCLUSION

Poverty and deprivation, it seemed to us, ought not to be measured simply in relation to levels of income. These are clearly important. But what is important also is the extent to which individuals and families are able to participate effectively in the wider - and rapidly changing - societies of which they are part.

The extent of such participation is obviously determined partially by income. But it is determined by other factors also. A family or a community which lacks access to education and training, to transport and to modern telecommunications is deprived in relation to families and communities which do have access to such facilities.

Because of the paucity of data on the subject, we found it difficult to make detailed estimates as to the prevalence of such deprivation in the more rural parts of the EC. But such information as is available suggests that rural poverty and deprivation are both widespread and tending to increase - not least as a result of the marked deterioration in rural services all kinds.

For rural deprivation to be tackled effectively, it was clear to us, men and women living in rural areas would require to have readier access to the labour market. Adequate housing would have to be much more generally available. And access to services would have to be improved.

We had no very dramatic solutions to offer. But we were convinced that real improvements could be brought about.

Poor people, we felt, were frequently lacking in self esteem and, consequently, in confidence in their own ability to change their own conditions. Meaningful action to combat poverty must start with attempts to alter this state of mind. People living in rural communities must be encouraged to take a pride in what is particular to them such as their own languages and dialects, their own histories and heritage. And any programme which is intended to improve their situation and prospects must, in some meaningful sense, empower the individuals, families and com-

munities concerned. They must have the key role in identifying what requires to be done and in putting in place the mechanisms needed to get those things done.

But grassroots action of this kind, though essential and greatly to be encouraged, will not of itself eradicate rural poverty and deprivation. Action is also required at the national and transnational level. Politicians, administrators and decision makers of every kind must be encouraged and persuaded to give a higher priority to the betterment of rural conditions.

One step in this direction would be to engage in the collection of much more detailed information both as to the nature of rural poverty and as to the types of action which might usefully be undertaken in order to combat it. But the collection of information will not, of itself, suffice to motivate either government or inter governmental agencies to devote more resources to the eradication of poverty in the countryside.

What is needed, in the view of seminar participants, is an attempt to foster a climate of opinion which will give real force to the notion that governments should feel themselves morally obliged to remove as many as possible of the causes of rural poverty and deprivation. And this would be the point of the charter which we discussed at some length.

Such a charter might take as its starting point the principle that no group of EC citizens should in any way be denied access to facilities considered basic and essential in the democratic societies to which they belong. In practice, that might mean recognising the right of every household to an electricity supply, to fresh running water and to an indoor toilet. It might also involve the recognition of people's rights to appropriate social welfare payments, to a reasonable diet, a worthwhile education and sufficient accommodation. And the purpose of setting these issues out in a charter of the type envisaged by the Arkleton Seminar would be to impose clearly stated responsibilities on both national governments and the EC to ensure that these rights are respected.

Published by The Arkleton Trust, Enstone, Oxon, OX7 4HH, U.K.
Printed by Rewley Press
ISBN 0 90 6724-40-6