

**RURAL INFORMATION NEEDS  
AS SEEN BY:**

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Adlai Stevenson, a number of years back was giving a talk in an auditorium. He was walking along with a friend, and he wasn't too well prepared. He turned to the friend and said, "I can hardly wait to hear what I have to say." I am in that situation also. I have heard a lot this morning about industrial development. It is a very crucial thing of interest to me. About a month ago, I was at home eating dinner, a rare occasion. My wife and I were talking. I said, "Bernie Vavrek has asked me to be at the rural leadership meeting at the Holiday Inn. I think it has to do with libraries. I can't imagine why he would want me there?" My wife, being a city girl, said "I don't know anyone more rural than you are!" And that is true.

Two miles south of here on route 68 is the Weaver family farm. I was raised in this county, in the thirties, on the family farm. There were seven children. It was a way of life. We didn't have electricity until 1948. That might explain the size of the family. In those days, that's all we knew. We farmed. We would go to Clarion. That was a rare treat to go to Clarion on a Saturday--maybe once a month. We would go to church every Sunday. That is what we knew, in that era, in that time.

I would like to go back--back to the eighteen hundreds. I would like to tell you a little bit about the history of this area. Clarion County, Northwestern Pennsylvania, helped feed the crucible of this United States. Naturally, the crucible was Pittsburgh. We sent iron ore; we sent lumber; we sent limestone; we sent coal by the Clarion River to the Allegheny River to Pittsburgh. This area was very prevalent in those days. That's what made this country and this area grow--the lumber, coal, limestone, and so on.

In 1900, that's what we still did. In 1900, we had 2200 farms in Clarion County--2200 family farms. We had limestone mines and coal mines and glass factories. I have to tell you the truth, in 1960 we still had that. The farms

started to decrease. We still had the glass factories, and we still had the brick factories, the clay, and so on. I think the reason the farms started to decrease is many parents worked hard to educate their kids, and the kids went away to school. They found out there was an awful easier way to make a living than farming.

The area has changed. In recent years our manufacturing sources are drying up. The glass industry—we use to have four glass factories in Clarion County. We have one right now. The coal business was the backbone of our economy of the 70s. We had probably about 30 coal mining firms in Clarion County in that era. We are down to about five. C and K was the largest producer of coal in the 70s—up to 6 million tons a year. We're down to 2 1/2 million tons.

So we have been hard hit in those areas. You may say, "well, why hasn't something been done to bring more industry in? Well, you have to look at the history of our area. I remember Interstate 80 when it opened here in 1968. To one of our county commissioners, I was commenting about what a nice thing it was. He said, "Well, you know people don't seem to understand it. We're taking a swath right through the heartland of Clarion County, 360 feet wide. Look at all the farmland we are losing. Particularly, all the tax base we're losing." Little did he realize that the tax base would be greatly increased and enhanced by the five interchanges that were put along the interstate. You can't condemn the gentleman for that. That's the way he thought.

Advancement has come slow to the rural area. Sometimes, as you grow older, you're a little more conservative. The interstate system had helped our area a lot.

One of the other things that has helped our area and kept our economy kind of solid is the Clarion University. Back in 1957, we probably had about 600 students here. We now have 6,000 students. As a matter of fact, it's the biggest payroll in Clarion County. It's somewhere around \$25 million. So not only the payroll but the expertise of these people, like Professor Vavrek, help our community. It's a real plus for us. We are mighty glad to have them. We are very fortunate to have them.

As far as looking at industrial development from a government standpoint, it wasn't until 1980 that the government, the county commissioners, decided

that we needed to do something a little more positive. And in that year, they established an industrial development authority. They hired a director and it's been moving forward ever since.

The reason that I'm here to speak today is that I'm a member of PEDFA Board of Directors. It's newly formed financing plan for the industrial development of Pennsylvania. I have packets out on the counter if you would like to take one, you're welcome to it. What it does is kind of replaces the IR, Industrial Revenue Bond and Mortgage program, that has been in effect for many years. As a matter of fact, Pennsylvania has been one of the benefactors of that. Because of recent tax changes, that's no longer a feasible program.

Governor Casey, David Wright said, has established this program to finance industry throughout the Commonwealth. One of the other things the Governor has done, that David (Wright said, is Pennvest, which is a very important thing for rural Pennsylvania, because sewage, water are real problems in Western Pennsylvania. I think that we have the tools to do things. We have been a little slow in moving forward, but I think we are going to have to go out and recruit industry. We can do that. We now have the tools to do that.