PANEL 3—SOCIOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF FORESTRY SETTLEMENTS

SOME HUMAN PROBLEMS IN AN INDUSTRIAL BOOM TOWN

D. L. Chapple*

One of the favourite and necessary pastimes of the sociologist is evaluation on the basis of very scattered and inconclusive evidence. So I am encouraged to adopt a fairly typical pose in commenting upon the University of Waikato's social survey of Tokoroa — a task which is still continuing. From an eighty-page survey report on Tokoroa (Swain, 1970) I shall select a small cluster of facts and figures. The main reference is to breadwinners, but I have in mind always the effects upon families. These figures may suggest areas of concern for planners and policy makers. Several other observations may further establish the salience of these as areas of concern.

First, and of fundamental significance, there is the mobility or rate of "turnover" of residents. At the time of the survey (November 1969) 86% of the householders in the sample had been resident in Tokoroa for ten years or less, 60% for only five years or less, and one in every six had been in residence for less than one year. New Zealanders as a whole are mobile people, and this situation can be partly explained by the rapid expansion in the major industry there. But, with or without comparisons, these figures must make us pause. Can any community fulfil its proper social and cultural functions effectively under such conditions? A comparison in, say, five years' time, would raise some interesting questions, especially when we consider another detail of the survey, namely, that over 90% of the householders could not reckon how long they would stay in the town; only one in five thought they would retire there.

Why do people come to Tokoroa? One-third of the householders gave "employment with high wages" as their main reason. The next largest category, 10%, gave "employment transfer" as the main reason, and another 10% gave "business opportunity" top place. But one in three now see no advantage in their working and living in Tokoroa. Nearly half see no prospect for advancement in their job; only one in six expect promotion. These figures suggest that expectations in other areas of life — cultural and social — may be higher to compensate for a lower personal commitment to the job and to the company.

At least one in five householders were working shifts at the time of the survey. Shift work brings extra money and,
perhaps, extra leisure time. But it may also generate psychosocial problems — in the worker and between the worker and his wife and family. Also, the majority of modern small houses are not designed for the shift worker — they are not even designed for the ordinary housewife, and certainly not for children.

Related to the newness of the town is the small number of elderly people. In a survey sample of 200 there were no retired persons whatever. Only 37% of the adult population was over 40 years of age. It is interesting to note that the local senior citizens club had to lower its entry age from 60 to 50. Some of the social implications of all this are suggested by Swain in his report (p. 19):

> Although in the conventional pakeha community senior citizens are not accorded any roles of importance by the population at large, they do have potential importance both in the community at large and within the smaller family group. In the community they are a pool of talent for civic, welfare and interest activities and groups, and in the family they are grandmothers and grandfathers, young adults’ link with their family past and with the folklore — however much at variance it may be with the contemporary ideology of childrearing — and moral support helpful in childbearing and childrearing, and young children’s link with the past. A nearly complete absence of older people may well be an unfortunate imbalance in any community.

This imbalance may be a contributing factor in the high turnover of residents, and not only, or not merely, an effect of newness and mobility.

Tokoroa appears to be a paradise for the “joiner”. I have no figures at hand on the actual pattern and incidence of joining. Of one sample, 84% said they never went to meetings, but over one-third of these people declared unqualified satisfaction with the existing facilities for leisure, and nearly two-thirds declared a qualified satisfaction. Whatever else Tokoroa lacks, it does not appear to be short of sports facilities, clubs, and so on. Satisfaction through informal social contact may, however, be a different story. The figures and other evidence suggest a very uneven pattern. Over 60% of the householders more often than not spend their ordinary weekends away from Tokoroa. Of another sample, 62% never went visiting locally. A half may “drop in” occasionally on neighbours. One in seven would take personal troubles to neighbours, and less than one in six did small favours and services for neighbours. This, and other evidence, suggests that at least a sizable minority of the householders have minimal day-to-day social contact with their neighbours — neighbours who are, in most instances, in close physical proximity.

An examination of the areas of local political interest and responsibility showed that only one person in the survey of individuals voted in the 1967 local body elections. One in ten knew they had not voted, but nine out of ten seemed bewildered by the question. Only 56% could identify the name of a council member from a list of six names. Another 35%
tried to, and failed. Nine per cent. admitted their ignorance. Less than a third of the people believed there was enough information being disseminated on local body affairs. A third thought not. Rather more than a third had no opinion. These facts, again, are disturbing.

Industrial boom towns have been a feature of New Zealand life for twenty years or more. Men and their families are recruited from a wide variety of countries and cultures. The family man seeks to "better himself" financially and, less often, vocationally. He and his wife face many social uncertainties in this search for material security, for small increments of status, and for the provision of better opportunities for their children — a search which may drive them from town to town and region to region several times in their married lives. What, then, of these social uncertainties? In the mushroom growth of an industrial boom town, the "slow wisdom" of traditional community life is not possible. The boom town is a synthetic community. Its inhabitants have not been nurtured in its rhythms and its rules. They have had to adjust to these, and adjust much more rapidly than people have been accustomed to over most of human history. There are many merits in the new and expanding social and cultural environment. There can be stimulating variety, and a pattern of status and prestige which is more fluid than in most traditional communities. A premium may thus be placed upon initiative, open-mindedness, and talent. But there are also many hazards. The social casualty rate, measured in terms of loneliness and apathy, whaka ma (shyness and lack of confidence), and frustration, is probably very high — much higher than in the older communities.

As the boom town is assessed it is useful to look briefly at four characteristics of the communities of history. I suggest that these characteristics have made us what we are, or like to think we are — sociable and socially responsible beings. First, communities have provided relatively stable environments for the socialization of children and, for any one child, the nurses and mentors were many, and spread right across the spectrum of age, sex, role and status in the community. I will say no more about community as environment for children, as this is being dealt with by other contributors to the panel.

Secondly, communities have provided a full range of continuing, intimate social contacts or exchange relationships for each person throughout his life. I do not think we shall ever return to such a degree of social stability and intimacy, but I do believe we have moved too far away from such a condition. The demands of modern industry, drawing people hither and thither to life in our new towns and neighbourhoods, place unfair stresses and strains upon mind and personality. There would seem to be a limit to the amount of social uprooting and transplanting a people can stand without their beginning to lose some of the characteristics of happily sociable and socially responsible beings. Do our new towns, and particularly our boom towns, provide optimum conditions for people to interact in the course of daily coming and
going — around the house and yard, and to the shops, the school, the neighbourhood park? Hardly. People are thrown together, as strangers, in a way which is not conducive to easy, frequent and satisfying social exchange on the one hand, or sufficient privacy on the other. Most of us require both by turns. True, the new towns spawn a multitude of clubs and other cultural activities. This is good. This, too, is "community" — lines of common interest and activity which cut across neighbourhood and even across class and ethnic distinctions. But "joining" is not to everyone's taste, and not all can join who might like to. For women especially neighbourhood may, for all its obstacles, remain an important social field.

Third, the old communities of history provided opportunities for persons to express themselves as responsible kinsmen, producers, artists and citizens — although usually within limits set by birth, belief and training. Modern technology can give the worker a larger material reward for his effort but it increasingly robs him of control over his task and his livelihood. This is a problem with profound social implications. In this paper I can only touch upon the problem in an indirect way, by asking the question: "In what other areas of life can a sense of worth and purpose be maintained?" What, for example, do our new industrial communities do to promote full resident responsibility and control in community and civic affairs? Is too much done by the expert, the planner, the politician? Local body politics are at present the preserve of a tiny minority. The great majority are, if not all apathetic and indifferent, at least resigned and conditioned to leave it to the zealous and practised few. We are, in this respect, the casualties of mass movement and a rapid agglomeration of people. Problems of social adjustment, the search for security and partial answers to the question: "Who am I?" and "What am I?", seem to leave little room for active community concern and the exercise of civic responsibility. Yet without these things our wider democracy must rest on weak foundations.

Fourth, and finally, the communities of history provided a built-in social security scheme for the old people and often gave them positions of usefulness and honour. Do our new industrial towns actively encourage the settlement of the grandparent generation — even before the current generation settles (or may settle) into retirement in the community? Do the architects of our boom towns think beyond providing a box and a yard for the working man and his immediate family? What about the extended family of Polynesian migrants — what provision is there for the transplanting of this highly desirable social unit into the new town environment? One could make more comparisons, between the "slow wisdom" of old communities and the social awkwardness of the new. I have picked out four broad characteristics because these help to underline the main message of this paper. Social and cultural arrangements can and must serve the widest and deepest needs of men, women and children. If they do not do so, they must be shaped and moulded, dismantled and remodelled if necessary, until they do so. The
industrial boom town would seem to be the ideal place to experiment in more satisfying forms of living.

LITERATURE CONSULTED


BRIEF NOTES ON HEALTH PROBLEMS IN SMALL FOREST SETTLEMENTS — A MEDICAL PRACTITIONER’S POINT OF VIEW*

Allan North, M.B., Ch.B.

For the past 25 years I practised medicine in a remote and fairly isolated forestry community some 50 miles from Rotorua. The total population, 80% Maori, was about 1,200 and lived in three small villages — Te Whaiti, Minginui and Rua-tahuna. When major logging started here, there was considerable turnover, but the population tended to stabilize later. Many of the younger people stayed on and some of the older ones did not leave until they retired.

There are two major aspects I wish to discuss — first, social problems, and, secondly, health. Milling had been in progress at Te Whaiti since 1928. By 1948 most of the people lived in their own homes; relations with management were good; the community was happy, contended and prosperous. Maori adjustment to the conditions had been surprisingly good, and there did not appear to be much anti-social behaviour or heavy drinking. When the sawmills and the forestry village

*Abridged.
shifted up to Minginui, although transport from Te Whaiti was provided free of charge, many families shifted there, largely because of better housing, electricity, nearness to work, good sanitation and other facilities. These the Maori families greatly appreciated, and they settled in well.

The major problem facing forestry families is use of leisure; without much to do, the main leisure activities are drinking and housie. A Working Men’s Club has been established in Minginui in order (among other things) to regulate the supply of liquor. The club tends to keep the men in the village, but, when both parents go, children are left unattended. This can give rise to such problems as delinquency. Gambling can also be a cause of trouble and may lead to unpaid bills, neglect of children and consequent poor nutrition. This in turn can lead to medical problems. Some sort of control seems desirable — a good Maori warden (who is invaluable) or personnel officer or social worker, with access to the officer in charge, and with a certain amount of power, would be excellent.

Boredom, especially among women, is a prime cause of unrest and unhappiness. This can be combated by the provision of a village hall with facilities for indoor games, adult education classes, sports, religious activities, interdenominational chapel. For the men, facilities for hunting and tramping and other outdoor activities are needed. For all these activities, a good social worker would be invaluable.

Lately, some wives have been employed on silvicultural work such as pruning. This has proved moderately successful. However, wives should be sent home by 3 p.m. at latest, so that someone is at home to supervise children after school, and so that the evening meal can be prepared in time. Suitable creche facilities should also be provided for pre-school children.

Basic recommendations for social improvement include a resident or visiting doctor who will take a personal interest in his people; a district or practice nurse with similar outlook; a keen social worker; management of local industry determined to maintain good standards at work, in housing and other facilities; social and religious activities; and Maoritanga.

To turn then to health. As would be expected in a young and virile group, health was good. The commonest illnesses were the respiratory ones — bronchitis, pneumonia, with occasional mild epidemics, and rare cases of typhoid. Heart disease was uncommon, but the usual “Maori syndrome” of mild to moderate hypertension, mild diabetes, gout and coronary occlusions was fairly often observed. Cancer, mainly alimentary and genital, and often in Maoris, was surprisingly frequent. Neuroses were uncommon; people who could not tolerate the conditions soon left for the towns and cities. There were no cases of pure mental illnesses, and only one murder. Accidents were uncommon — about 25 per annum — and mostly not serious. However, there were 10 fatal accidents in 25 years. Wife-beating was a favourite pastime — nearly always well-deserved.
Health was, in fact, well catered for. Working conditions were governed by strict safety regulations; a doctor, a district health nurse and a St John ambulance were always on call. The only real problem was to get people to use common sense in looking after themselves — for example, taking off wet clothes as soon as possible to prevent respiratory infections, the use of proper diet, and so on. These simple precautions could have helped prevent the majority of illnesses encountered in this area. Basically, preventive medicine is the real key to the situation. It is much easier, cheaper and more effective to prevent illness than to cure it. Hence the recommendations for social improvements already enumerated. The true aim and art of medicine is not dispensing pills and mixtures, but the care of the whole person — mind, body and soul. Only by means of this total care can we meet the needs, and truly serve, the people under our care.

ADJUSTMENT AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PROBLEMS IN FOREST COMMUNITIES — THE POINT OF VIEW OF A SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER AND CAREER FORESTER'S WIFE*

Mrs W. Rockell

The following notes, brief and perhaps superficial, illustrate the effects of frequent shifts on the family and the effects of both shifting and rural life on children, especially their education. Frequent shifts involve incidental expenses which are not covered by allowances, but this is a minor point. The most difficult problem is the effect on young children of uprooting them from familiar surroundings; there are cases where professional help is needed, and there is scope for research into this aspect of child development. For the parents, particularly the wife, and for older children, the most difficult aspect of shifting lies in the need to make new friends. The husband has the easier adjustment, for he makes contact early with his workmates, but for the wife this period of adjustment can be distressing, and she may show resentment for the family, the job, the surroundings, the new house and the employer. A good neighbour is invaluable. Apart from social adjustments, children often have difficulty in adjusting in their school work.

Where a move is to a forest community, the wife usually finds a lack of employment opportunities, and may have to resign herself to long, and often lonely days. Wives have no chance of supplementing the family income in order to counteract the higher cost of country living and the fact that they have to pay rent for a home they cannot own. For the newly married couple this can be a serious matter, and it is not surprising that young wives are reluctant to see their husbands posted to small forest communities. More fortunate
couples can earn several thousand dollars before starting a family, and so give their married life a solid material base. The picture is not, however, entirely bleak. Most small communities have a variety of organizations such as women's institutes and church groups where personal contacts can be made, while the very smallness of the country means that it is neither strange nor difficult to transfer from one place to another.

The education of children living in small communities and having to move often is a difficult problem. For pre-school children the number of kindergartens is inadequate, and the waiting time for entry is about 20 months. Thus a child of 3 years old, moving into a new centre, may have no chance of attending kindergarten prior to entering primary school. Play centres fill the gap to some extent.

The small classes in country schools give the quiet child or the slow learner a good start in schooling, especially if there is a good teacher; fortunately, a surprisingly large proportion of country school teachers seem to be good. By Form I level, however, the child will begin to miss the wide scope of intermediate school curricula, and will also lack many sporting and cultural activities normally available in larger centres. The most important step forward made in recent years is the Form I to VII school.

Children going to a small country secondary school have particular problems. Staffing may be inadequate in quantity if not in quality. Many young teachers "get their country service over first", and are therefore inexperienced and do not stay long. This is bad for the school and the pupils. Many country children have to travel long distances to secondary schools and often have farm chores to do either before they leave or after they get home. This in turn can lead to lowering of classroom standards. Small schools find the available finance more difficult to apportion, and are usually short of equipment and books which larger schools have no difficulty in getting. There is a strong case for extra grants for smaller schools.

The alternative is to send children to secondary boarding schools, a step parents are often reluctant to take. It is by no means an ideal solution to the problems of both the educational and general development of the children. Moreover, the child coming into the big city secondary school from the small country primary school has strengths and weaknesses unknown to those who have lived most of their lives in the city. He often has rather a narrow basic education, however thorough it may be, lacking such things as elementary science, art and music. He may not have had the opportunity to acquire some physical skills, such as swimming. On the other hand, not having suffered the disadvantages of streaming at an early age, he may have a good deal of tolerance and understanding of the difficulties of others. This gives him, in some cases, a maturity which compensates for the sophistication he lacks.

Some remedies for these difficulties can be suggested which would not be costly and may not be difficult to apply. They should be considered on the basis that a contented man is a
good investment. First, there could be more discussion with
the employee about his possible future moves, and more
planning ahead. Secondly, as many people as possible should
be located in towns and provided with transport to work. In
the long run this remedy is likely to be cheaper than estab­
lishing and maintaining isolated settlements.

Other remedies might be more costly. Financial allowances
for rural living could be increased; allowances paid when
moving could be more liberal to cover contingencies. Greater
per capita allowances for smaller schools would improve the
quality of education available. The provision of practice
nurses for country doctors, already beginning, should be ex­
tended. Finally, Government departments, such as Health and
Education, responsible for well-being, should be better in­
formed of the particular difficulties of non-farming rural
dwellers; this could lead to more enlightened policies. More­
over, research findings on aspects of family live in New Zea­
land are almost non-existent. The brief notes given here indi­
cate that there is considerable scope for scientific investiga­
tion. More is known about growing trees than about the
people who grow them.

PRE-SCHOOL, PRIMARY SCHOOL AND FAMILY
COMMUNITY PROBLEMS IN A FOREST COMMUNITY*

Mrs F. Allen

1. Introduction

For the past ten years I have lived in Kaingaroa Forest Vil­
lage. Kaingaroa is considered to be isolated, but Murapara is
only nine miles away, and Rotorua only 32 miles; the area
is served reasonably well with bus services. There are approxi­
mately 1,000 people living in the village, which is also the site
of Kaingaroa Forest Headquarters. The community consists of
a wide range of forestry employees in the various branches
of the Forest Service, and understandably there is a wide
cross-section of people with various skills and outlooks. A
good proportion of the population is Maori and, because of
my own Maori background, I can probably see and under­
stand many of the problems which exist there. As my family
has been raised almost completely in this environment, and
because I am a teacher, I have become deeply involved in both
play centre and in primary education.

Perhaps one of the greatest single factors which faces a
young mother in forest communities such as Kaingaroa is
what to do with herself during the day. There is always plenty
of housework, but this can become monotonous. This is, of
course, a problem elsewhere but it seems rather more pro­
nounced at Kaingaroa because the outlets for women's talents
are so restricted there. This cannot be ignored if married
workers are to be attracted to forestry areas.

*Abridged.
2. Education

One of the greatest single factors which faces teachers in rural schools is a general lack of language background. By this I mean that children do not have sufficient opportunity to widen their social experiences — an essential background to the development of adequate oral communication, and later to the teaching of reading. This need is well understood by teachers, and opportunities are always being sought to supplement local experience throughout the children’s school life. Opportunities are not always readily available in rural areas. The cost of transporting children out of the village is often high. Private cars are usually unavailable in sufficient numbers either because fathers are working, or because mothers cannot drive, and many families do not own cars. Outside contacts, including sporting excursions, are thus often severely curtailed. In these circumstances, it would seem reasonable for the employer (in this case the Forest Service) to provide transport which can be considered a basic need. Attempts to obtain it have, however, been unsuccessful; apparently there are matters of policy or insurance which have to be overcome. But surely, if there is a will, such minor objections could be easily remedied.

For pre-school children, the provision of varied experiences can be through play centre. Here a child can develop motor co-ordination through playing with blocks and hammering, and can widen experience by listening to stories. Here also a child can learn simple social and health rules which will later serve him well. In isolated communities, therefore, groups of mothers see the need to establish play centres in order to give pre-school children opportunities for preparing themselves for school and for society. Much of the work done by play centres can and should be done by the parents themselves. This is not always the case at Kaingaroa. There, many working mothers do not have the time, or are too tired to give their children the attention they so earnestly need. Another factor is that many parents do not have the background themselves, and so cannot provide the necessary experiences. Again, there are families without cars, and lack of mobility inevitably restricts opportunities. A child begins the learning process right from birth, and the richer his early experiences the better able he is to develop and also to cope with the world at large.

Unfortunately, there is no chance of making attendance at play centre compulsory. Therefore, children attend only if their parents are really interested, or if they can be persuaded to send their children. Many parents cannot see the need for pre-school training. The importance of play centre can be easily seen when a child reaches the age of 5 years. Children from play centres settle more easily into routine than those who come straight from home. They are thus readier for the more formal learning process. Their better understanding and use of language is particularly important. It may be of interest to note that it may take up to six months, and sometimes more, before a child is ready to read,
if pre-school experiences have not been provided.

Employers, where labour is short, and where there is a demand for women workers, should recognize these basic educational needs and provide assistance to ensure that the next generation has adequate early guidance. Also, as a means of preventing children being unattended, the hours of work for women could be adjusted to coincide with school hours.

3. The Needs of Young People

It is true to say that in a school "an active playground is a happy playground". This statement can be extended to include young people in general. If they are active there is less likelihood of trouble. Playground facilities at Kaingaroa are nonexistent. This is particularly important for the periods before and after school when both parents may be working.

Some thought could also be given to the establishment of a youth centre for teenagers. These have proved invaluable elsewhere and there is no reason why they should not be
equally successful in forest villages. Community halls, swimming pools, playgrounds and other facilities are essential provisions for youth in the larger forestry communities. If the employer requires the men to work on Saturdays (and sometimes Sundays) and employs married women as well, it could be fairly said that he has a responsibility to provide facilities (and guidance) for youth, who so frequently are left to their own devices. Such facilities should be looked upon as necessities, and as the essential means of reducing vandalism and anti-social behaviour in the community.

4. Leadership and Authority

Although the provision of facilities where young people can be active constructively is important, there is still need for more proper control and authority. Duty officers cannot be expected to act as policemen; they have their regular duties to perform. Weakening of authority is due to some extent to a population shift from the rural community. This is commonly referred to in Kaingaroa as the “brain drain”. People with the means and the money, and thus those who are most in authority, have been allowed to move into Rotorua. The reasons given are that there are better opportunities for children, both educational and social, in the larger centres. This shift has caused a definite imbalance in the rural population. For example, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find people to act on school committee, P.T.A., play centre, and so on. Thus, because there is such a lack of facilities at Kaingaroa, there is a shift to Rotorua, but the people who move out are the very ones who should be responsible for seeing that conditions at Kaingaroa are improved. If these people were required to live where they work, they would make the effort to provide the right climate and the right facilities.

In conclusion, the employer responsible for the establishment of large forestry communities like Kaingaroa cannot be concerned only with working conditions. He must assume social responsibilities also. These include the provision of community leadership at several levels, even if this means training and employing specialists for specific jobs; making commitments in the fields of education and welfare; and providing finance for community facilities where and when required. Lack of care, long delays, and financial cuts may be economically desirable but they may be socially disastrous.