Mid-continent Net Migration Losses Decline

CENTERs OF NET MIGRATION GAINS IN THE GREAT PLAINS, 1970-1976

By Armin K. Ludwig

As a unit the American region known as the Great Plains suffered net migration losses in each of the five census periods prior to 1970. During the following six years, however, these losses had begun to abate.

This study examines the 1970-1976 net migration changes in a bloc of 320 nonmetropolitan, nonmetropolitan-fringe counties roughly coincident with the Great Plains and seeks to account for the higher net migration gains recorded by some of these counties.

The Study

The bloc of 320 counties is referred to in this study as the Mid-continent region and is made up of parts of the states of Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana (Map 1). The region is effectively bordered on the east and south by metropolitan fringe counties which are in most cases contiguous to one another. Where they are not, state borders serve as the boundaries of the region. On the west a combination of metropolitan fringe and mountain counties serves as the Mid-continent region's border.

Recent Migration Changes

Between 1970 and 1976 the net migration losses in this region had declined to a mere 3,200 persons (Table 1). This small number represented a sharp reduction from the net migration losses of 165,000 persons suffered by this same region between 1965 and 1970. In the 1970-1976 period almost 35 percent (111) of the 320 nonmetropolitan/nonfringe counties in the Mid-continent region recorded net gains. These gains ranged from a few to 4,700 persons (Table 2, Map 1). Sixteen counties gained 1,000 or more persons, and in the aggregate they accounted for almost 53 percent of the Mid-continent net migration gains in the 1970-1976 period.

Distribution of High Net Migration Counties

The 16 counties with net migration gains of 1,000 or more persons are widely distributed over the Mid-continent region. Oklahoma has four: Garfield (Enid is the principal town), Woodward (Woodward), Jackson (Altus), and Texas (Guymon). Two other states each contain three: North Dakota has Burleigh (Bismarck), Cavalier (Langdon), and Morton (Mandan), and Kansas has Saline (Salina), Finney (Garden City), and Riley (Manhattan). South Dakota contains two such counties, Pennington (Rapid City) and Hughes (Pierre), and so does Wyoming with Converse (Douglas) and Goshen (Torrington). Nebraska has one, Lincoln (North Platte), and Montana one, Valley (Glasgow). These counties also range widely in population. Garfield, Oklahoma; Pennington, South Dakota; and Riley, Kansas all had 1970 populations exceeding 55,000, and the cities of Enid (population 44,008) and Rapid City (population 43,836) approached metropolitan status in 1970. Garfield and Pennington will doubtless be the first two counties to breach the contiguous bloc of Mid-continent nonmetropolitan counties. At the other end of the population scale Platte and Converse in Wyoming each had fewer than 6,500 inhabitants.

Changing Economic Bases in High Net Migration Counties

High net migration into a county is usually the result of that county's growing and/or changing economic base. The employment structure of each of the 16 counties underwent significant changes in the 1970-1976 period (Table 3). In every case the percent of civilian labor force growth in one or more industry groups far exceeded such growth in other industry groups and in the civilian labor force as a whole.

Three kinds of activities triggered growth in the various industry categories. Energy development and associated activities were primarily responsible for increasing the civilian work forces in eight of the 16 counties. Activities related to the distribution of goods and services produced employment growth in five. Direct state and Federal government expenditures triggered work force growth in the remaining three.

Energy Development and Associated Activities

Drilling for oil and the activities associated with these products were primary stimulants to the labor force growth in four of the counties. Increased drilling for oil and natural gas raised employment in the mining category in Converse County, Wyoming and in Woodward County, Oklahoma. In the latter the growth of energy company headquarters further increased the work force in the mining category. In addition, a fertilizer plant using natural gas and a plant producing iodine from oil-well salt brine.
raised employment in the manufacturing category in Woodward County. A new large textile mill using local cotton also added to manufacturing employment there. Texas County, Oklahoma has been the site of increased natural gas drilling operations and attendant construction activities. In Garfield County, Oklahoma the regional oil drilling boom, the expansion of energy company headquarters, and the growth in transport of oil and locally made petro-chemicals have all contributed to the sharp increase in energy-related employment in that county. Coal development and associated activities provided primary stimuli to employment growth in four of the counties. The building of coal-fired power plants raised employment in the construction category in Burleigh County, North Dakota. Many of the Burleigh County workers live across the Missouri River in Lincoln County, South Dakota is the site of the State Capitol, Pierre. Recent state government construction and growth projects have had a sharp impact on the civilian labor force in this small community. The housing construction boom in housing construction to accommodate the new population. Saline County, Kansas (Garden City) also grew as an experimental family training center. Together they accounted for the sharp increase in the service employment category in this small Montana county.

Net migration losses in the Mid-continent region declined to a mere 3,200 persons for the 1970-76 period, compared to net losses of 165,000 between 1965 and 1970. In every one of the eight counties which owed its growth to energy development and related activities, net migration accounted for half or more of the 1970-1976 population growth (Table 3). The migration proportion ranged from a low of 25 percent to a high above 90 percent. On the average 64.3 percent of the 1970-1976 population increase in these counties came through net in-migration. Their employment growth is a product of what might be termed the “energy boom” of the mid-1970s. The three counties supported by state and Federal commitments have a very similar pattern.

### Table 1

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<th>State</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wyoming</td>
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<td>-9,300</td>
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<td>+5,800</td>
<td>+100</td>
<td>+11,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Montana</td>
<td>-6,700</td>
<td>-5,300</td>
<td>-27,900</td>
<td>-10,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Dakota</td>
<td>-900</td>
<td>+5,600</td>
<td>-3,200</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>+72,400</td>
<td>+8,300</td>
<td>+320</td>
<td>-185,100</td>
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a) For both periods counties studied were those beyond the metropolitan fringe in 1970.

b) Two Wyoming counties are in the metropolitan fringe of a Colorado SMSA. For Kansas, seven SMSA counties and 21 metropolitan fringe counties are in Missouri; for Nebraska two SMSA counties and 10 metropolitan fringe counties are in Iowa. One Nebraska county is in the metropolitan fringe of a Colorado SMSA. Two South Dakota metropolitan fringe counties are in Minnesota and one is in Iowa. For North Dakota two metropolitan and nine metropolitan fringe counties are in Minnesota.
In all of them more than half of the 1970-
contemporary areas, are supplied
net-migration, and for the group
migration proportion averaged 66.1
percent.

The distribution centers, however,
present a different picture. Their
net-migration gain of the 1970-1976
population increase ranged from a high
of just over 60 percent to a low of just
over 20 percent. The migration proportion
averaged only 42.9 percent. These counties
as a group were not caught up in the
population shift that tended to mark the
energy supported counties.

The Effects of Economic Growth on
Migration: The Long View

In many of these 16 counties employ-
ment development was in activities which
are traditionally regarded as unattractive
over a long period. Construction is very
attractive as a source of employment in
any one given place. When power lines,
factories, and power plants are completed,
the construction labor force moves on
or seeks other employment. When the
ASB missile silo was completed in Cavalier
County, North Dakota in the mid-1970's,
the loss of the construction labor force
had by 1978 brought the county’s employ-
ment pattern back nearly to its pre-boom
condition. The same thing may occur in
those construction-supported counties
such as Burleigh and Morton in North
Dakota and Garfield in Wyoming. The
regional construction labor force, how-
ever, may find work in other counties
which have yet to exhaust their coal re-
sources and power development potentials.

Energy development and associated
activities were primarily responsible for
increasing the civilian work
forces in eight of the 16 counties
which showed net migration gains of
1,000 or more persons.

Oil, gas, and coal are finite and non-
renewable resources, although continual
new discoveries of the former two and
the immense reserves of the latter may
yield steady employment for several
decades in various places in the Mid-
continent region. As sites of exploration
shift, however, one county's employment
losses may be another's gain. Large energy
headquarters operations, however, will
probably remain in place, rising or declin-
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of the new manufacturing plants making
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Direct government commitments
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FOSTER CARE IS FOCUS OF NATIONAL MEETING

"In celebrating the International Year of the Child, we must look at the needs, and the rights, of a special group of children—our nation’s 500,000 foster children," declared Elizabeth Taylor Warner, speaking at the Washington Town Meeting on Foster Care held last month.

A major focus of this meeting was H. R. 3434, the Social Services and Child Welfare Amendments, which is the first major piece of comprehensive legislation on foster care and adoption Congress has considered in this decade, according to David Evans, former president of the National Association of Foster Parents.

Speaking at the same meeting as Mrs. Warner, Mr. Evans had this to say, "As the phenomenon of child abuse and neglect has grown, so has the need for foster family homes. If we are to restructure young lives and reunite families, we must have stable substitute families who are in turn adequately supported and assisted in their efforts."

Training of Trainers

Following the development of the curriculum, four workshops were held last fall and winter at the Boys Town Center for the Study of Youth Development in Omaha to train train-the-trainers. In all, 73 people were trained making up 35 teams.

Speakers at the training sessions included Vera Fahlberg, child psychiatrist from Golden, Colorado; Linda Jewett, family therapist of Harvard, Massachusetts; Al Vandenberg, director of Operation Right, a counseling service in Omaha; and Gerry Wecker, a member of the Psychological Counseling Center at UNO, and consultant to foster parents in Shelter Care Program in Lincoln.

Instruction covered all 12 curriculum modules, adult learning principles and group discussion techniques, use of audio-visual equipment, how to teach (which included opportunities for each team to do videotaped micro-teaching), and recruitment and publicity.

Publicity was a key part of the training program. Brochures were sent to agencies and foster parents describing the program. Public service announcements were utilized for both radio and television. The discussion leader teams received instruction in carrying out the publicity in their communities, including the preparation and timing of news releases.

Workshop Evaluation

Pre- and post-quizzes and a reaction form measuring satisfaction with and utility of the lessons were used as evaluation tools for each curriculum module. The participants also filled out a form to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the five-day training workshops. These formative evaluation tools were used to revise both the curriculum and the training workshops in order to make the training program more valuable.

Training of Foster Parents

The teams began 12-week training programs in their home communities upon completion of their own training at the fall and winter workshops. The recruitment of foster parents was easier than some teams had anticipated, and in many cases, additional participant's materials had to be sent out. The smallest group averaged five persons in attendance; the largest, 18. The evaluation tools used during the training workshops were also utilized during the 12-week training sessions.

At the end of these sessions, certificates were awarded to 463 participants, 163 of which were men. All 15 teams completed their training sessions by the first week of June.

Evaluation and Technical Assistance

The group discussion learning process appears to be a valuable one for foster parents. The sharing of experiences and learning from each other and then back to Nebraska's plan for foster parent education, the training of trainers sessions. Given Legal Training "Nebraska Foster Parent Training Program." The curriculum was evaluated for content, and the outline given in the Request for Proposal by the Nebraska Department of Public Welfare. The 12 modules selected were: 1) Introduction, 2) Understanding the Problem of Child Abuse, 3) Fostering the Abused Child, 4) Surviving Separation, 5) Is It Legal? Rights and Responsibilities of Foster Parents, 6) Children's Rights, 7) Child Development: "Is It Normal?," 8) Discipline, 9) Working With the Agency to Benefit the Child, 10) Helping Everyone Adjust, 11) Enhancing a Child's Self-Concept, and 12) Drugs, Alcohol, and Your Child.

During this development stage, frequent meetings were held with the steering committee which acted in an advisory capacity. In addition to Ms. Erdi and Mr. Kendrick, this committee included Don Deppe, project director; Ann Coyne, originator of the project design and representative of the School of Social Work at the University of Nebraska at Omaha; Ains Garden, caseworker, Omaha; Claire Burton, caseworker, Douglas County; Pam Stahl, foster parent; Barb Revere, caseworker and foster parent; Chris Jolly, Department of Public Welfare; and Dave Bohling, Department of Public Welfare.

The curriculum was evaluated for content and style by consultant experts and by members of the steering committee. Consultants included Nancy Iker, Paul Pline, Donna Haeger, Bob LaGow, Ken Mattran, Janet Porter, Pat Thompson, and Mike Bumbaugh.

Recruitment of trainers was also initiated during this stage, and planning was done for the training of trainers workshops. Teams, consisting of a foster parent or parent couple matched with a caseworker, were selected to be trained as discussion leaders. Tentative training sites were selected for the state, based on foster parent population and availability of qualified trainers. Twenty-two sites were chosen (see Map 5).

COMMUNITY SERVICE

This is the third in a series of articles about the community service activities of the Center for Applied Urban Research. The first was "Nebraska Child Welfare Workers Given Legal Training Program" which appeared in the February issue of the Review. The second, "Three Workshops Offer Training to Iowa Corrections Personnel," was published in March.

For a more complete description of the services available through CAUR, write for a copy of the brochure, "Service to Communities."
FOSTER PARENT TRAINING PROGRAM

(Continued from Page 7)

course specializing in problems of adolescents will be developed during the next 14 months.

Brochures describing the program and curriculum are available by writing to Barbara Kendrick, Room 111, 501 North 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588.

The training manual ($20.00), participants' materials ($5.00), slides and accompanying tapes, “Picture of Me” and “Is It Legal?,” ($20.00 per set), and a set of posters ($1.00) may be ordered from the Center for Applied Urban Research, University of Nebraska at Omaha, 60th and Dodge, Omaha, Nebraska 68182.

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