

A Lesson In Community Effort



HAINSTORMS MEAN TROUBLE in Russell City, as this picture shows after 1.1 inch of rain fell March 9. As a result, school attendance dropped sharply the next day, 90 pupils being unable to wade through lakes like this. Russell City, one of the poorest districts financially in the county, is trying desperately to improve its condition, and is finding some success under the severest of handicaps. No drainage has been provided the area, but the county has improved a few roads. For details, see the accompanying story.—(Alameda County School Photo)

Russell City — the community which knows how!

That description may surprise many residents of the Hayward area who most frequently label "that place out by the dump" as the "blums" of the Hayward area. But in several of its enterprises, Russell City not only is proving it knows how, but is doing it under the severest of handicaps. Russell City provides a model which the entire area could adopt with profit.

Take roads for instance.

DOCTORS Russell City roads were just a series of chuckholes which trap the car of any unwary driver who attempted to negotiate them. Appeals to the county board of supervisors failed. So the newly-

formed Russell City Improvement league went to work.

Delegates visited dozers in Hayward—who testified in writing that they declined to serve Russell City patients because the roads are so bad. Other delegates went to garbage collectors—who stated they refused to pick up garbage for the same reason. They went to the postoffice—which had declined to give service. They went to the school, where Mrs. Wilda C. Mette, principal, pointed out that after a single hard rain, the streets were so bad that attendance of the 342 pupils dropped to 253—a reduction of 99, because of the flood.

THE EVIDENCE They went to the county school superintendent's office and had a

on the board of supervisors and requested relief.

In the face of such evidence, the supervisors authorized road improvement. Not much, but some. A few of the main streets. But that was more than had ever been done before.

"Russell City — a community which knows how!"

In Russell City, the people hope that more will be done in the future, and are taking steps to see that it is done.

They were brushed off once by a supervisor who said, "You don't have enough votes. Show me the votes, and you'll get your results."

So the residents of Russell City—black and brown, and white—are registering in unprecedented numbers to cast their ballots at the next election.

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Many of them, coming from areas where they were denied the right to vote, are going to the public library to ask for books on civic affairs and the rights of citizens.

INFORMATION And the demand is also heavy for information on parliamentary law, as the Russell City Improvement club assumes an ever more

active part in community affairs.

Meetings are conducted under handicaps, for such are the national and racial origins of the people of Russell City that many of them cannot understand each other. Interpreters restate questions to their individual groups, there is a buzz of conversation in different languages, and then the interpreters come back with the votes from their groups. There is no vote, as in United Nations councils, and no special jealousy. Just the realization that there's a job to be done.

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CLEANUP While the rest of the Hayward area only talked about cleaning up its highways and roadsides, the people of Russell City were doing something about it. They organized a cleanup campaign, secured the donation of trucks, and gave their own services. True, there's more to be done, for they have far to go. But they are on the way.

After a disastrous fire, the people wanted fire protection, so they banded together to provide a fire truck. They couldn't afford taxes

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For a fire district, but they could give money and time. They pledged \$2,250, which is a big sum for Russell City, and now are looking for the best equipment which that money will buy.

SCHOOLS For Russell City is a poor district as far as wealth goes. The school district's richest farm land was taken away by the federal government when the airport was built.

As a result, school taxes from the district yield only \$2,200 per year, or approximately \$5 for each one of the 342 pupils. The act which equalized state aid so that assistance is given on the basis of average daily attendance will help Russell school pay the salaries of

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member of his staff photograph the lake of rainwater which is Russell City after a shower.

With their proof in letters and in pictures, delegates again called

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"We believe there is nothing more important to this country than to lower the prices of goods people buy.

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We will do our part in this territory

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