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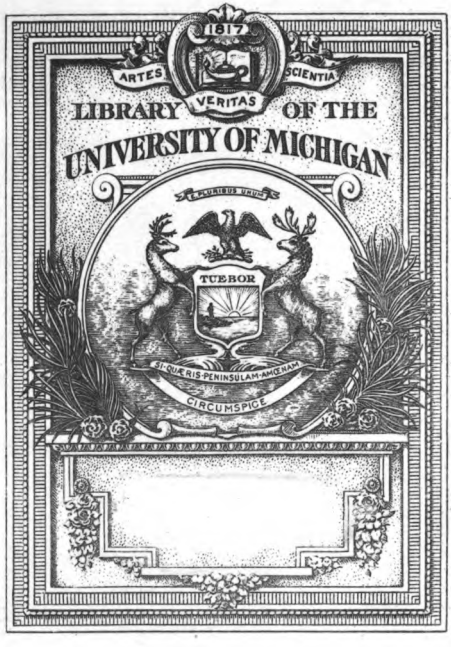

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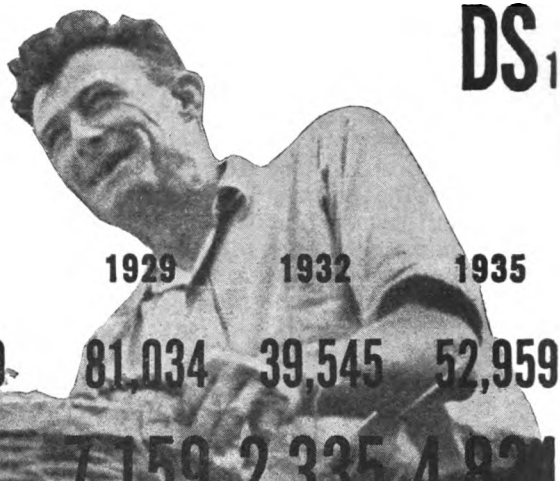
WHAT SHOULD BE THE FARMERS' SHARE IN THE NATIONAL INCOME?



DS1

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Millions of Dollars]

ITEM	1929	1932	1935
TOTAL INCOME PRODUCED	81,034	39,545	52,959
AGRICULTURE	7,159	2,335	4,8
MINING	1,894	474	8
ELECTRIC LIGHT & POWER & GAS	1,295	985	
MANUFACTURING	19,308	5,623	11
CONSTRUCTION	3,225	670	0
TRANSPORTATION	7,216	3,760	4,260
COMMUNICATION	1,023	744	739
TRADE	10,955	5,254	6,551
FINANCE	8,219	4,360	4,433
GOV'T, INCLUDING WORK RELIEF PROGRAM	8,805	7,148	8,646
GOV'T, EXCLUDING WORK RELIEF PROGRAM	6,805	7,148	7,333
WORK RELIEF PROGRAM			1,31
SERVICE	9,207	5,379	5,40
MISCELLANEOUS	4,728	2,813	2,95

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Materials have been prepared for the 1936–37 season on the following topics:

DS–1 What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
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United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photograph by Resettlement Administration)
December 1936

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WHAT SHOULD BE THE FARMERS' SHARE IN THE NATIONAL INCOME?

Many people are concerned as to whether or not farmers are getting their share of the national income. The following questions call attention to a number of factors affecting farm income. Which do you regard as most important? Why? What about other factors?

1. **How has the income from the crops you raise changed from year to year since the war?**
2. **Which changes were caused mostly by changes in price? Which by changes in production?**
3. **Did the prices paid by consumers for your products change as much as the prices you received for those products?**
4. **How much did middlemen's margins change?**
5. **What has been the farmers' share in the national income since the war?**
6. **Do farm families need as large incomes as city families?**
7. **Can you tell a great deal about the real value of money income without knowing the prices of the things it is used to buy? In recent years, how have prices of the things you buy compared with the prices of the things you sell?**
8. **What do you consider an adequate income for farmers? Would "parity income" be too much? too little?**
9. **What methods should farmers use to secure a fair share of the national income?**
10. **How much can be done by individual efforts? What should be the function of the Government?**

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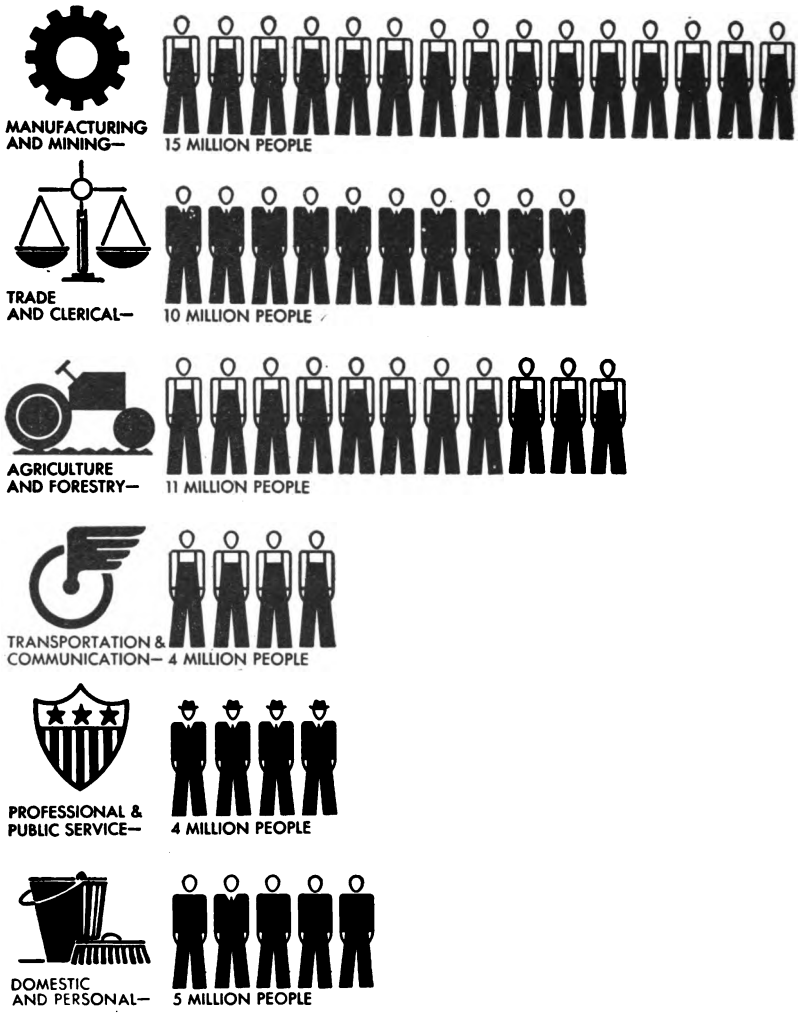
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE— WHAT THEY DO

Each figure represents **1** *million wage earners*



SOURCE: 1930 CENSUS

Prepared by the Informational Service, Social Security Board, Washington, D.C. with the cooperation of Pictorial Statistics, Inc.

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WHAT SHOULD BE THE FARMERS' SHARE IN THE NATIONAL INCOME?

Groups discussing the farmers' share in the national income approach the question from a variety of angles.

I Some groups are most interested in discovering the general facts about farm and national income: how large the national income has been during recent years, and what part has represented income from agriculture; how the farm part of the Nation's income has compared with the farm part of the Nation's population. They then go on to discuss whether recent changes in farm income have been due mainly to changes in price or mainly to changes in production; to changes in distributors' margins; to changes in city purchasing power, or to other changes.

II Some groups are less concerned with the share in the national income of farmers in general than with the share of farmers living in certain sections; of farmers as contrasted with city dwellers; of farmers on farms of low productivity as contrasted with farms of high productivity; of agricultural laborers as contrasted with farm operators.

III Some groups prefer to discuss the farmers' share in the national income in terms of goods rather than money. The chief matters that interest them concern the country's productive capacity, the extent to which it is used, and the extent to which it would have to be used if farm and city families were to have the things they need and want.

WHICH OF THESE GROUPS WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO JOIN if you were taking part in a discussion of the farmers' share in the national income?

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Some groups start their discussions of the farmers' share in the national income by reviewing the figures, and reviewing just what they mean when they talk about the national income and the farmers' share in it.

WHAT IS NATIONAL INCOME?

NATIONAL INCOME, they agree, IS THE INCOME OF THE NATION AS A WHOLE. All the groups in the Nation chip in to make the national income. Factory workers chip in, professional people chip in, farmers chip in, and so on. The farmers' share in the national income is what agriculture contributes to the national income. That contribution is measured in dollars when we talk about national income in terms of dollars; in terms of goods when we talk about national income in terms of goods.

In discussions of income a sharp line has to be drawn between the income American farmers GET INDIVIDUALLY, that is to say, their yearly cash income plus the value of the products they raise and use right at home, and their CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATION'S INCOME. Any group's contribution to the Nation's income is less than its gross income because of deductions that have to be made to prevent overlapping. For instance, slices of gross farm income appear in the national total as the services of other groups of people, teachers, police, merchants, factory workers and others, whom farmers pay out of their gross income. When the income of the Nation is being discussed, the contribution of each occupational group has to be looked on as a part of the national whole.

WHAT ARE THE FIGURES OF THE NATIONAL TOTAL?

Groups that go in for a review of the figures notice that the national income rose from about 28 billion dollars in 1910 to nearly 66 billion dollars in 1920; that after a setback in the depression of 1921 it climbed to a new height of almost 80 billion dollars in 1929. Between 1929 and 1933 it dropped to 46 billions; in 1935 it was 56 billions.

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WHAT PART CAME FROM AGRICULTURE?

They notice that agriculture's contribution to the changing total of national income was itself subject to change. In 1930, agriculture contributed 18.6 percent of the income of the Nation. In 1918 and 1919, the farm contribution reached a peak of 20.5 percent. During the early 1920's, it averaged just above 12 percent; after 1925, it declined, reaching a low of 7.5 percent in 1932. In 1935, it was 10.6 percent.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS BEHIND THESE FIGURES?

One point which is important in considering the contribution of any economic group to the income of the Nation is THE RELATIVE NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THAT GROUP. It is a well-known fact that, until the depression, the number of people on farms was declining, while the number of people in towns and cities was growing. In every year but three, from the beginning of the World War until 1931, the population on farms was less than it had been the year before. This migration from farms to cities had its effect on the rural and urban contributions to the national income.

But the decline in farm contribution to national income that actually took place was proportionally much greater than the shift in numbers from farm to city. Even in 1910, the general contribution per person to the national income was $306, as against a farm contribution per person of only $163. During the 1920's, the farm average ran below the general average by over 55 percent. In 1932 it was 70 percent below. It was 59 percent below in 1935.

So it is necessary to look for facts and factors other than the changes in farm and city population to account for a good part of the changes in the farmers' share in the national income. The search for these facts and factors often starts lively discussions.

PRESSURE ON FARM PRICES

Most people agree that if you want to get at THE CAUSES OF THE UPS AND DOWNS of the farmers'

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contribution to the national income in terms of dollars, there are two things you have to know about the commodities from which they produced that income. You have to know HOW MUCH THEY RAISED, and you have to know HOW MUCH THEY GOT FOR IT. Most people agree that the ups and downs of farm income since the war have been due more to changes in farm prices than to changes in farm production. During the 1920's farm production was pretty steady. The largest production that we had between 1909 and 1936 was only about a third above the pre-war average, while farm prices in 1919 were 225 percent above, and in 1932, 39 percent below their pre-war average. In the period 1933–36, however, income was affected by changes in production, some of which were due to acreage adjustment and some of which were due to weather.

But when the discussion turns to the question of what influence on prices has been most important in swelling or shrinking the farmers' income in recent years, agreement is less easy to reach.

WORLD MARKET QUOTATIONS

Some people insist that the chief cause of shifts in the farmers' contribution to the national income has been the changing demands that have affected world agricultural prices. They say it was the World War that pushed prices up from 1915–1919; that it was the declining world demand that took farm prices down during the 1920's, and piled up the carry-overs that broke prices again from 1929 to 1933; and that it was the effect of devaluation of the dollar that raised prices received by American farmers in 1933.

DISTRIBUTORS' MARGINS

Other people grant that foreign demand had a good deal to do with changes in the farmers' part in the national income, but insist that a second cause, of no less importance, is to be found right here at home. These people

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point to the spread between prices paid by consumers for farm products and prices received by farmers for those same products; and inquire whether many of the farmers' recent difficulties are not to be found in that quarter. In 1913, the farmer received about 53 cents of every dollar that consumers spent on fifty-eight farm products, such as beans, butter, pork, milk, etc., that make up the chief food purchases of American families. During the War, his share rose to 60 cents. During the 1920's, it dropped back to between 44 and 48 cents. In 1932, he received only 33 cents. Since then, his portion has increased, but is still below the level of the 1920's, let alone the pre-war level.

WORKERS' PAYROLLS

Still other people say that the demands of the foreign market and the commissions of the middleman both affect the farmers' capacity to contribute to the national income less than the demand of the domestic market. By consequence, they declare, the farmers' attention should be fixed on the wage levels of urban workers, and on the extent of employment among non-farm groups. Payrolls and farm returns from foodstuffs move up and down together. When unemployment or underemployment is widespread, the workers' contribution to the national income declines with their declining production, and a lowering of the farmers' part is sure to follow.

Which of the above factors do you think has been most important in affecting the income of American farmers in the years since the war?

Which of the above factors has been most important in affecting farm income from the principal crops and livestock products raised in your locality?

Can you name other factors that have had similar importance in changing the share of the farmers in the national income?

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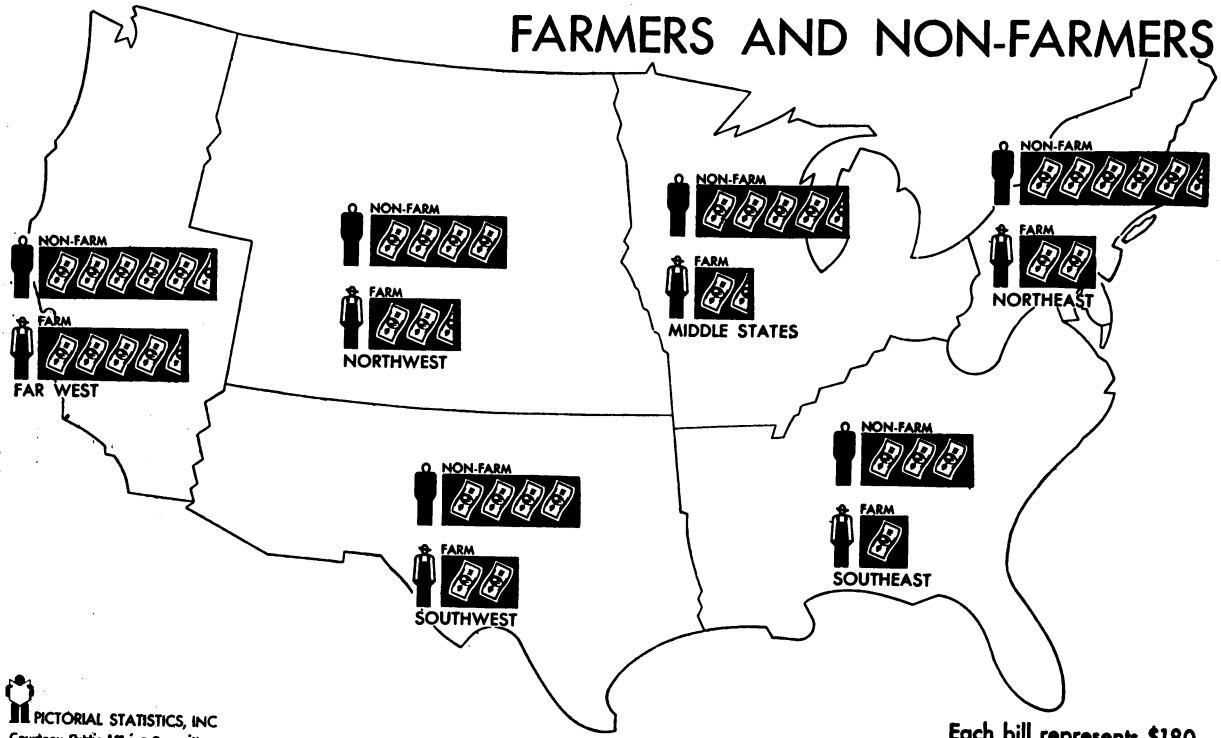
PER CAPITA INCOME OF FARMERS AND NON-FARMERS



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Other groups say that for some purposes it's all very well to talk about the contribution to the national income of the average farmer, but when you come right down to Tom, Dick and Harry, you discover that the average man just doesn't exist. Some farmers contribute a much bigger than average share to the national income, and others a much smaller than average share.

INCOME BY REGIONS

Take regional differences, to begin with. These groups claim that if you're going to talk about average incomes, you can learn a lot more about where farm income is in this country if you take regional averages than if you take the national average. Of course, there are big variations between farmers in every region, but the fact remains that the average farm income on the Pacific Coast in 1929 was four and a half times as great as the average farm income in the South East, and almost three times as great as the average farm income in the Middle States.

FARM AND NON-FARM INCOME

The regional figures show the areas in which, on the whole, farmers are at an advantage or a disadvantage as compared with farmers in other areas. When they are contrasted with figures on non-farm income, they show the relative position of farmers and other folks who live right around them in the same section of the country. They show that the income of New England farmers in 1929 was not much more than a third of the income of non-farm New Englanders, and that a similar situation existed in the Middle States. Nowhere except in the far West did the income of the farm dweller approach the income of the non-farm dweller, and even there, per capita farm income was $818 as compared with a per capita non-farm income of $908. In other words, while there might be a good many city people who were at least as poor as the poorest farmers, there were also a good many city people whose incomes were way above the incomes of the top group of farmers.

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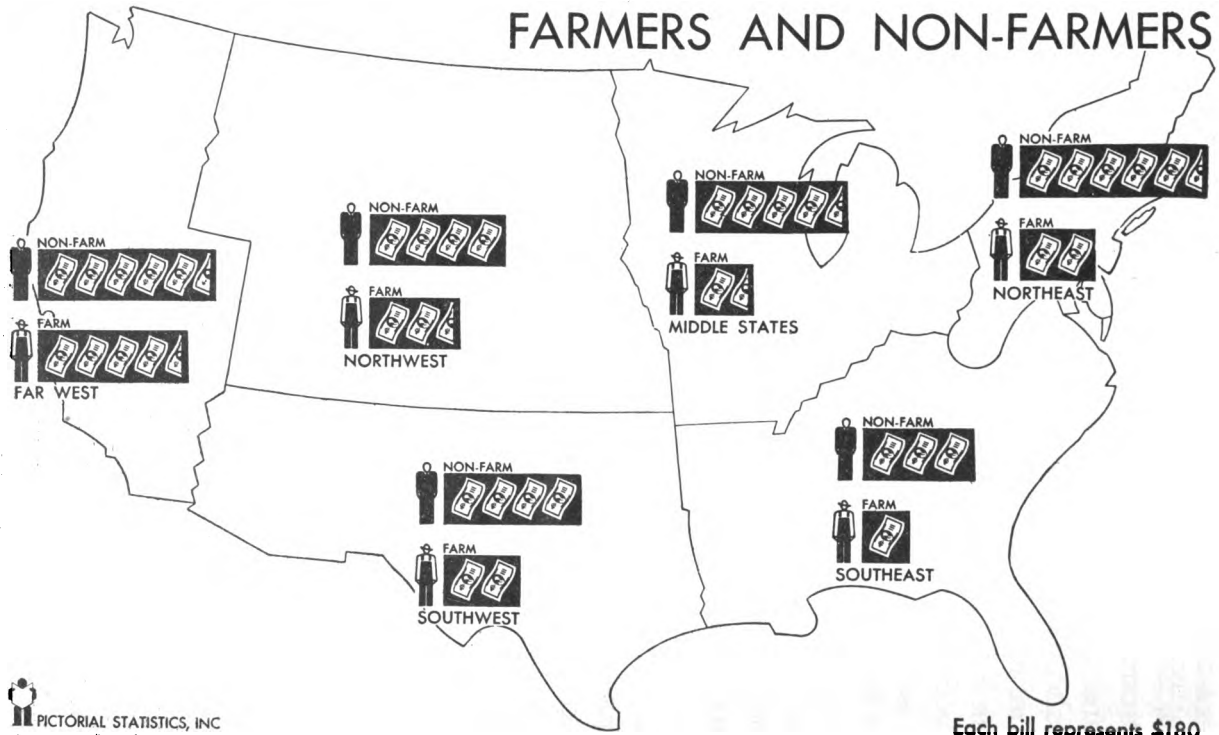

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NATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY INCOME

Or if you don't want to go at the question on a regional basis, say the groups that are interested in breaking down general averages of income, look at the variations in income of different groups of families in the United States. If you take the 1929 income figures—which were a lot more cheerful than any figures have been since—the average income of the 27½ million family groups in the country was $2,800. But we all know, many of us at first hand, that there were lots and lots of families that didn't have anything like $2,800 in 1929. If you break the figures down, you find that 71 percent of all our families had less than $2,500, and 21.5 percent had less than $1,000. The 36,000 families with the biggest incomes had an amount equal to that of 12 million families with incomes under $1,500. How many of these do you suppose were farmers?

DIFFERENCES IN INCOME PER FARM

A hint as to the answer to that question—these groups pursue the subject one step further—can be picked up from the figures on the value of products grown on the farms of the country. They show that in the census year 1929 over one-fourth of the farms in the Nation raised less than $600 worth of products, including products used by the family, and nearly half of the farms raised less than $1,000 worth of products. Less than 10 percent of the farms of the country raised over $4,000 worth of products.

INCOME ON THE AGRICULTURAL LADDER

Another way of getting at the capacity of different groups of farmers to contribute to the national income is to look at AVERAGE INCOME ON THE TOP AND THE BOTTOM RUNGS OF THE AGRICULTURAL LADDER.

The weighted average monthly wage rate paid to agricultural laborers who had work varied from $40.52 in 1929 to $19.17 in 1933 and $23.45 in 1935; the total of cash wages paid was 955 million in 1929, 352 million in 1933 and about 405 million in 1935.

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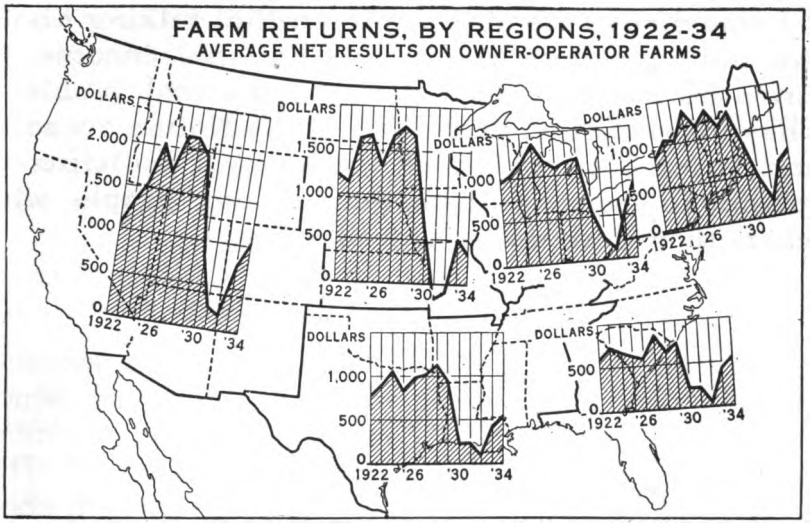

The above chart shows the average net results of owner-operators reporting to the Department of Agriculture.

When you take the trouble to sort your figures out a little, say the groups who are bent on seeing what is behind national averages, you begin to find out where different parts of the national income are located.

What are some of the main causes of regional differences in farm income? Does low buying power of farmers in one region affect the income of farmers in other regions? Does low buying power of farmers affect incomes of non-farm groups?

How adequate, in your opinion, are the wages received by farm laborers in your locality?

In your opinion, are fairly wide differences in family incomes a desirable or an undesirable feature of economic life?

How do you think the family income on low-income farms might be increased? How much land now in farms is incapable of producing an adequate living for the people farming it? What should be done about these areas?

Is it necessary to have parts of our farm lands operated on a business basis for cash income, and other parts operated on a subsistence basis? Is it desirable?

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Some groups are of the opinion that talking about the national wealth and the national income in terms of money hardly touches the real problem. They insist that what matters is the Nation's wealth and income in terms of goods, and in terms of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of our people with where they work and where they live.

NATIONAL WEALTH IN GOODS

Such groups say, find out about the natural resources and the capital plant, the factories and farms, which produce the food, clothing, houses, automobiles and other equipment that go to make up what we like to call "THE AMERICAN STANDARD OF LIVING", and you will know more about national wealth than figures will ever tell you.

NATIONAL INCOME IN GOODS

Get down to brass tacks, these groups urge. If, when you look at the distribution of INCOME IN TERMS OF MONEY, a good many family incomes look mighty small, turn those incomes into goods and see how they look then. Take some of the figures quoted by the preceding groups, or some of the studies of how farmers' or workers' families spend their earnings—take your own budget, if you like—and make a list of the goods provided. Then make lists of the things that you think ought to be included in farm and city family livings. (What are the chief differences between the lists?) Look at the two lists, and you get an idea of national NEEDS IN TERMS OF GOODS.

OUR CAPACITY TO PRODUCE AND CONSUME

Now look at our national capacity to produce these things. Have we at present enough farms and factories to produce all the things people need? Are we using them fully? Have we enough manpower to produce the needed goods? Are we using it fully? Could the products be disposed of if we did? To what extent were our farms and

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factories in full production before the depression? During the depression? This year? To what extent was our manpower used before the depression? During the depression? This year? WHY ARE NEEDED GOODS NOT PRODUCED? How can the purchasing power of the groups who would like to buy those goods be increased?

When you get into questions like those, say the groups that are interested in income in terms of goods, you are really getting somewhere. If you think of the farmers' share in the national income in terms of goods, it helps you to understand it in two ways. It helps you to see the Nation's income as a whole to which the farmer contributes his part, and you can figure, in terms of farm products, what that part ought to be. Then it helps you to think of farmers as one of the groups among whom the Nation's income is distributed, and you can figure, in terms of goods, WHAT QUANTITIES THE FARMERS OUGHT TO HAVE of the products contributed by other people to the Nation's income.

How much produce do you think American farmers ought to raise as their contribution to the Nation's income?

Should the amount farmers produce be related to the amount produced by other groups in the Nation's economy?

What do you think is the most practical way TO PROVIDE MORE OF THE GOODS THAT FARMERS AND OTHERS NEED BUT DO NOT HAVE AT PRESENT?

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MORE ABOUT FARM AND NATIONAL INCOME

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

INCOME AND ECONOMIC PROGRESS. Public Affairs Committee, National Press Building, Washington, D. C. 1936. $0.10.

YOUR MONEY AND MINE, An Analysis of Our National Income. Maxwell S. Stewart. Foreign Policy Association, 8 W. 40th St., New York City. 1935. $0.10.

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DISTRIBUTION OF NATIONAL INCOME. The Index, v. XIV, No. 11, November 1934. The New York Trust Company, 100 Broadway, New York City. Free.

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PLENTY, CAN MAN HAVE IT WITHOUT SHARING IT? Harper Leech. Unit study Booklet #8, Modern Problems Series, American Education Press, Columbus, Ohio. 1933. $0.15.

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THE FARM BUSINESS. Roman L. Horne. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1935. $0.25.

THE NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM IN RELATION TO THE NORTHEAST. Henry A. Wallace. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1934. Free.

INCOME FROM FARM PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES IN 1935. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

AGRICULTURE'S SHARE OF THE NATIONAL INCOME. George M. Peterson. Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics. University of California, Berkeley, California. 1936. Free.

INDUSTRIAL PRICES AND THEIR RELATIVE INFLEXIBILITY. Senate Document #13, 74th Congress, 1st Session. Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 1935. $0.05.

PRICE SPREADS BETWEEN THE FARMER AND THE CONSUMER. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

HOW WORKERS IN LARGE CITIES SPEND THEIR INCOMES. Labor Information Bulletin, September 1936. U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. Free.

NATIONAL INCOME IN THE U. S. 1929–35. U. S. Department of Commerce, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 1936. $0.25.

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HOW DO FARM PEOPLE LIVE IN COMPARISON WITH CITY PEOPLE ?

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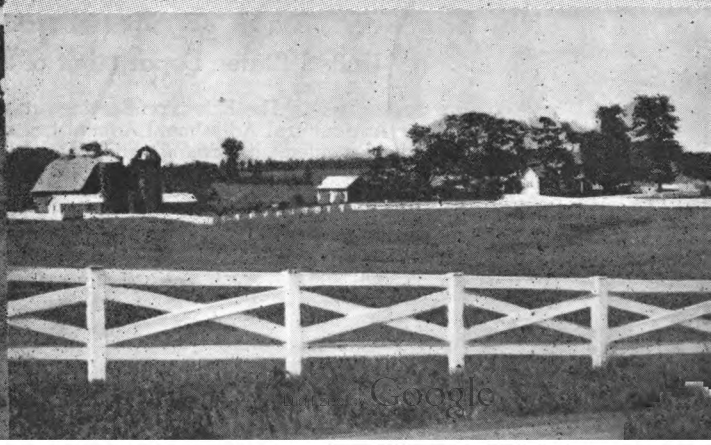

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United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photographs by Resettlement Administration and Works Progress Administration)
December 1936

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HOW DO FARM PEOPLE LIVE IN COMPARISON WITH CITY PEOPLE?

The American standard of living is a much discussed subject. Some people think our standard is very good; some people think it isn't what it ought to be. Still other people think there is too great a difference between city and country living. How would you answer the following questions about the comparison:

1. **What do you consider the greatest advantage of country life? The greatest disadvantage? Why?**
2. **What reasons would you give for the great range of living standards in the city? In the country? Are city slums any worse than rural submarginal areas?**
3. **How do rural schools compare with city schools?**
4. **How do rural and city medical facilities compare? How many people can afford to use present facilities as much as they need?**
5. **How can lowest living standards be improved?**
6. **What does unemployment have to do with lowered living standards?**
7. **How closely does the unemployment problem touch city workers? Farmers?**
8. **Where do you think today's farm boys and girls will find jobs? Why?**
9. **In how many ways are city workers and country workers dependent on one another?**

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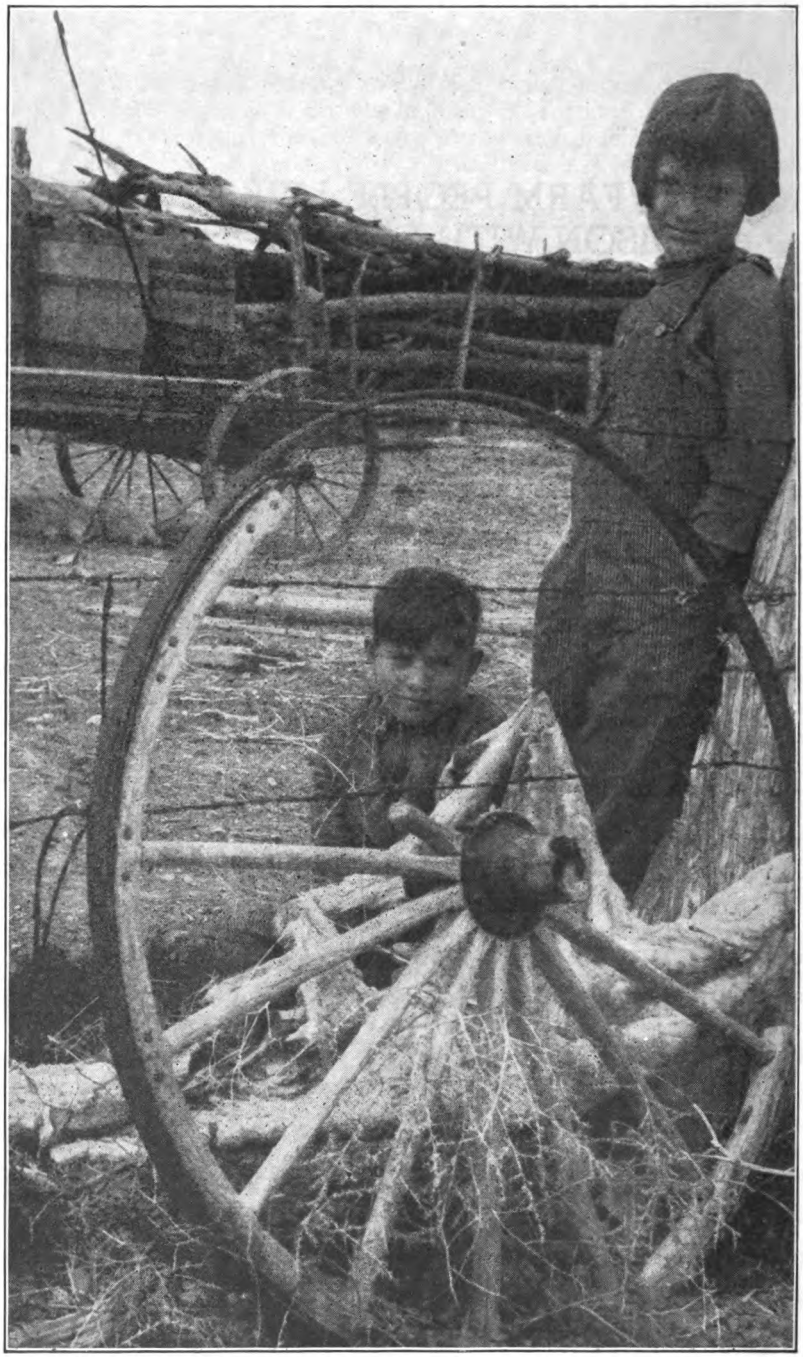

How Green Will The Grass Be For Them?

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HOW DO FARM PEOPLE LIVE IN COMPARISON WITH CITY PEOPLE?

Some farm people think: "If we could only move to town, everything would be very much better for us."

Some city people think: "If we could only move to the country, everything would be very much better for us."

These two groups think the way they do because they are dissatisfied with conditions the way they are, and they want to better themselves. That is why in times of depression city people grow restless and begin to think about country life as a way to peace and plenty. That is why in good times farm people begin to yearn for the city's glittering lights.

ONE GROUP LOOKS AT THE OTHER GROUP AS THOUGH THE GREENEST GRASS WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FENCE.

The thing each group overlooks is that NOT ALL THE GRASS on the other side of the fence IS GREEN.

When they do see this, they begin to wonder WHY THE GRASS ON BOTH SIDES IS NO GREENER THAN IT IS, and WHAT CAN BE DONE to freshen up the brown spots.

WHY DOES THE COUNTRY GRASS LOOK GREENER TO CITY PEOPLE?

There are always some city people who like the idea of moving to the country. But especially when times get hard and jobs grow scarce, the country looks like a place of refuge to more and more people.

In normal times if you asked a city man why he was leaving town for the country, he might reply: "Well, we like the idea of getting away from the noisy, dirty, overcrowded streets. We want to go where people have a

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chance to breathe, a chance to live at a pace that isn't so fast and furious. We want our kids to learn independence and self-reliance, as well as cautiousness and thrift.

"THE FARMER GETS MORE SATISFACTION OUT OF LIFE than ordinary workers. He knows how to do a lot of different things. He makes things grow. It isn't like fastening a single kind of bolt in a factory all day long, or running a machine that pastes labels on cans all night. When the farmer's job is finished, he can feel that he's got a stake in what he's done, and his family a stake in the future.

"FAMILY LIFE MEANS MORE TO PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY. Families are bigger. They stick together better, and more children and old folks are about. Why, every average farm family raises twice as many children as a city family. That's because country mothers have more children, and because people just naturally live longer when they work out of doors. They tell me rural people can expect to live 5 to 7 years longer just because of being in the country. Now that's a comfort, especially when you know there's going to be plenty to eat!

"Speaking of plenty to eat, of course that's a real important item. It's plain enough that as between rich city folks and rich country folks one can eat just as well as the other. But in the country even poor folks can eat enough to give 'em strength for their kind of jobs. They get more greens and milk and butter and eggs—the sort of food that's good for growing kids."

In a depression period if you asked an average city man why he was leaving the city for the country, he might answer: "Food's the reason. Looks to me like LIVING IN THE COUNTRY IS THE SUREST WAY OF FILLING A FAMILY'S BREAD-BASKET.

"WHEN A MAN GETS OUT OF A JOB, IT'S BACK TO THE FARM FOR HIM. If you're about 40 they say you're not worth a tinker's dam. They don't even give you a chance to get old. While you're young and strong they'll

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give you a job—if there are any jobs. But when they're through with you it's sink or swim! It's a lot better trying to grow a mess of turnips in your own garden than trying to be first in a bread line. In the city we can't stand it any longer—but in the country we can get a new start. We'll have something to hope for with our children."

In 1932, and in other years during the recent depression, for the first time probably in the Nation's history, more city people moved to the country than country people moved to the city.

MILLIONS OF CITY PEOPLE HAD THE IDEA OF GETTING A NEW START IN THE COUNTRY. The agricultural census counted 2,000,000 people living on farms January 1, 1935, who were not living on farms 5 years before. They pushed back to the farms where they came from, or started new farms one way or another. For several years the steady stream continued, until there were 500,000 more farms in 1935 than there were in 1930. But now the stream has reversed, and ONCE AGAIN RURAL PEOPLE ARE TURNING TOWARD CITY STREETS in growing numbers.

WHY DOES THE CITY GRASS LOOK GREENER TO COUNTRY PEOPLE?

It's a fact that city grass DOES look greener. Between 1920 and 1929 it looked greener to 19 million farm people—6 million more than the number of city people who moved to the country.

Like city people, many rural folks get tired of the place they live. They want to make a change, and the city seems to offer everything in the way of high-styled living.

If you asked some farmers why they'd like to move to town, they might tell you: "That's easy enough. Anybody'd get tired of milkin' a cow day-in-an'-day-out, rain or shine, hot or cold. It just gets plain tiresome feeding the chickens and the pigs. Of course, tractors have cut out feeding horses—but nobody's invented a machine to give milk yet!

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"The city sure is the place for a fellow who likes to take in a movie once in a while, or go to some sort of musical affair. And you get more neighbors, and know more people—LIVING IN TOWN IS A MORE SOCIABLE WAY TO LIVE."

A rural woman might be apt to tell you: "Town is the best place to be because you can always get a doctor. Folks say having a baby is less dangerous there—and that's something to think about. If you need to go to a hospital, you know THE CITY OFFERS THE BEST THERE IS IN MEDICAL CARE.

"And there's another reason that's just as good: CITY SCHOOLS ARE VERY MUCH BETTER THAN RURAL SCHOOLS. There's hardly a mother anywhere who wouldn't want her children to grow up to be smart and well-educated. Fact is, it's getting harder and harder for folks without an education to make a living. Boys and girls have a better chance in city schools."

But the point appealing most strongly to farm people is the fact that they feel more money can be made in the city.

"Just look at the cash INCOME OF THE AVERAGE CITY PERSON," many farmers say. "Why, it's better than $500 a year. That's a heap more money than the average person on a farm receives, having to get along on $160 a year. Just plenty of country people would be sitting pretty if they had that much. It's reason enough for moving to town!"

HOW ABOUT THE BROWN SPOTS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE FENCE?

Some people will agree immediately: "It's a shame that farm income is so much below urban income. It means THE FARMER HAS BEEN SELLING CHEAP AND BUYING DEAR."

"No, it's not such a shame," other people say. "The difference isn't as great as it seems. The farmer gets a great deal more for less money. After all, when you con-

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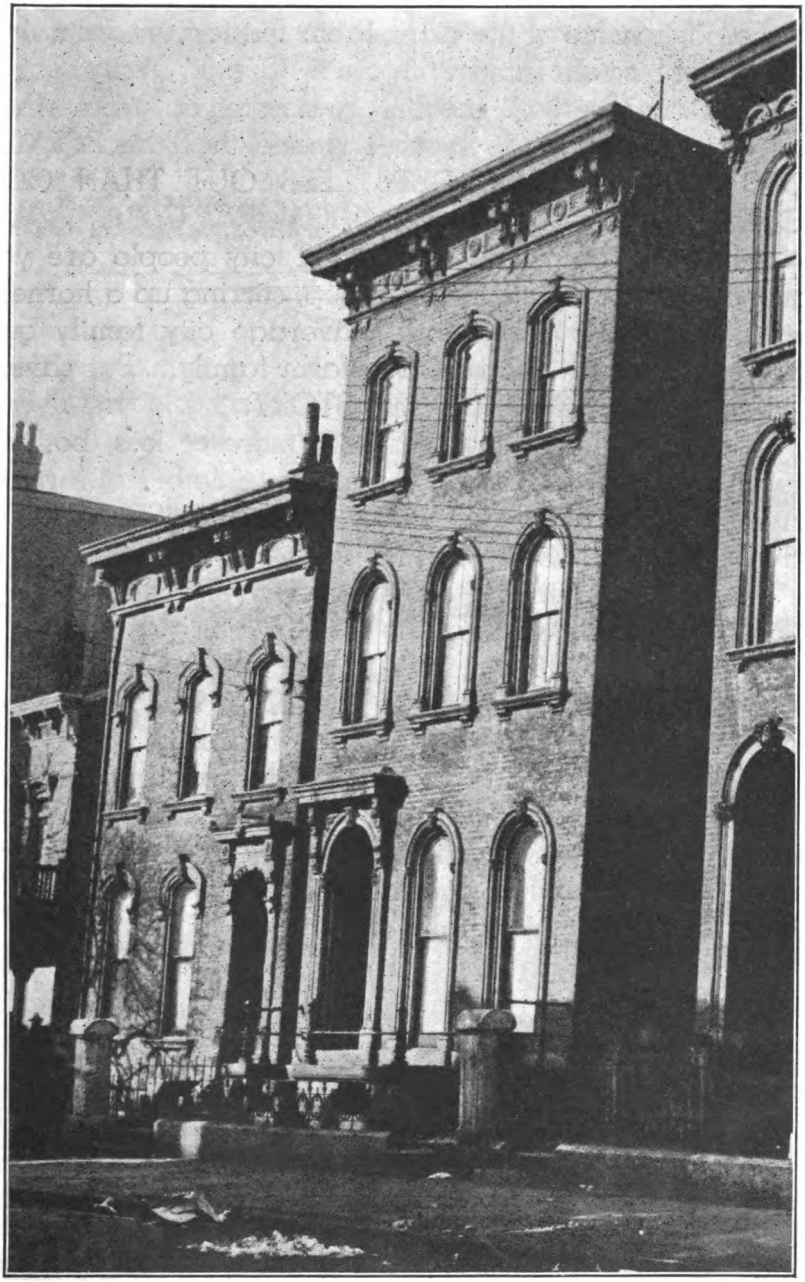

Many City People Live Like This.

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sider city rents and taxes, you see how much better off the farmer is. There's several hundred dollars a year cash value to the food produced and used on the farm, as well as the cash value of the extra labor the farmer ordinarily gets out of his own family."

"That may be so," the first group retorts, "but when you get right down to it, isn't it true that the FARMER PUTS MORE IN AND GETS LESS OUT THAN CITY FOLKS?"

"But WHAT farmers and WHAT city people are you talking about?" asks another group, stirring up a hornets' nest. "Certainly it's true the average city family gets more money than the average farm family. But saying it like that only tells HALF THE STORY.

"There are TWO GROUPINGS, more or less, both on the farm and in the city: The smallest number of farmers have the largest income, and the LARGEST NUMBER have the SMALLEST INCOME.

"It's the same in the cities. A FEW PEOPLE GET A GREAT DEAL MORE than the large majority.

"The kind of life you live in the city depends on the income class you're in. Even in 1928, thousands of city families had to live the meagerest sort of lives.

"And the kind of life you live in the country depends on the income class you're in, just the same as the city. Even in 1928, three-quarters of American farmers didn't have enough for what's considered a decent standard of living—and about one-half were in POVERTY.

"That sounds like a sort of tough dose to take," some people agree, "but it's plain as day that city and country are just alike in one thing: IT'S THE POOR PEOPLE WHO REALLY CATCH IT."

"But poor people in the country don't catch it as hard when it comes to eating. It's the city poor who can't afford to buy food enough for the work they do," it is pointed out. "That means they have to depend on cereals and cut down on meats and vegetables and even eggs and milk. It's easy to see why you read about thousands

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and thousands of underfed city children having rickets and tuberculosis."

"Well, that ought to about balance the skimpy rural medicine as far as a bad point's concerned," other persons state, "though it's certainly true rural folks don't get the care city people do. They can't afford it. Even the old-fashioned country doctor has become just a character for the movies. And RURAL HOSPITALS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN."

"Why don't farmers in various small areas take care of everybody on the health-insurance plan?" cooperatively-minded persons ask. "Plenty of counties have tried the 'having a doctor by the year' idea and found they could keep a first-class doctor, have all the attention sick-folks needed, and yet come out cheaper in the long run. MEDICAL CO-OPS ARE JUST PLAIN COMMON SENSE for folks who want to stretch their dollars."

"But people don't think about cooperation unless they're trained to," interested individuals reply. "WHAT KIND OF SCHOOLS DO RURAL CHILDREN GO TO?"

Many a school teacher can answer that question. "Country schools vary," they are likely to say. "In poor land areas lots of schools are the out-of-date, one-room type of years ago. They have inexperienced teachers, too, who come and go almost with the seasons.

"And the depression made it even worse—for the good ones as well as the poor ones. Supplies were cut down, teachers fired, and terms shortened. Why, in a single year of the depression—1931—more than 2,000 RURAL SCHOOLS SHORTENED THEIR TERMS anywhere from one to eight months. Some closed up altogether. Rural boards cut down the number of school buses. In parts of the South the Negro schools were cut before the white, even though the white followed close behind as times got harder. But things are improving, now."

Many people are disturbed by what has been happening to rural schools. "ISN'T IT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT COUNTRY SCHOOLS BE MADE BETTER AND BETTER because more children are born in the country

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than in the city?" they ask. "It's the rural surplus that makes up for the city shortage. And it's the unskilled and ignorant who are being less and less needed, and the unskilled who number greatest on relief rolls. Why couldn't the Nation as a whole help the country areas that can't help themselves? WE OUGHT TO LOOK TO THE FUTURE, and the cities ought to help pay for the education of their future citizens."

"Well, one way of looking to the future is by looking at PRESENT STANDARDS," remarks a young agricultural college graduate. "What kind of houses do you think rural boys and girls have to live in?

"Throughout the whole United States only 1 farm in 9 has electricity furnished from a central station. Does that make it any easier to study? And how much spare time can farm folks have when something less than a third of American farms have their water supply in the house? And with half of these furnished by hand pumps? Is it any wonder that 73 rural houses out of 100 don't even have a kitchen sink with a drain—much less bathtubs?

"But don't think the only place where people have to get along under such conditions is in the country: there are thousands of city houses with no electricity. And one of the rosy dreams of slum dwellers is some day to live where there's running water, a little sanitation, and a nice hot stove in winter.

"Things were like this back in the 'good old days' before 1929, before America got a real good start into the depression. Since then UNEMPLOYMENT HAS MADE BAD STANDARDS WORSE.

"At one time in 1935 every SIXTH person in the cities WAS ON RELIEF—11,250,000 urban people, and every EIGHTH person in the country—6,750,000 rural people. The two together meant that EVERY SEVENTH PERSON IN THE UNITED STATES WAS ON RELIEF."

"That makes it pretty plain city jobs are less secure than rural jobs," some individuals immediately point out.

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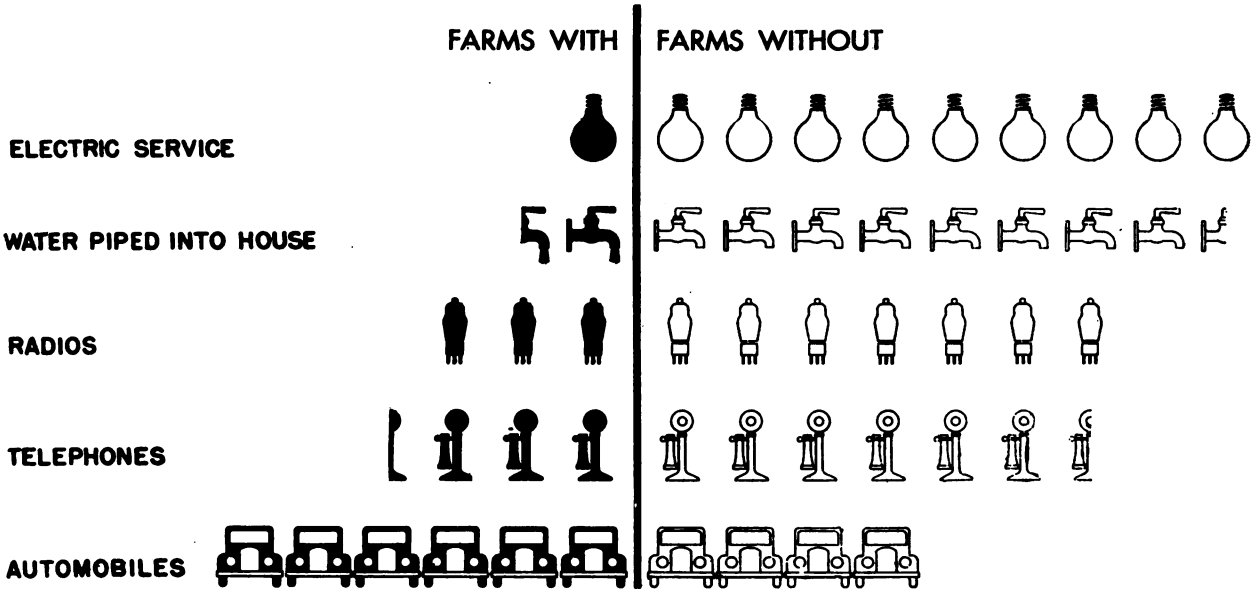
AMERICAN FARMS ARE BEHIND THE TIMES



Each symbol represents 10% of all farms

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"It's fine so many city people have moved to the country lately. They're better off than they were."

"But is it so fine?" they are asked. "The farms are already crowded, the good land all taken up. Many newcomers must find abandoned farms, or start out on land so poor they can't make a living. When they get into such straits, don't they become just as big a social problem as a city slum? Will they get enough of the right kinds of food? Have enough to wear? Be able to pay their debts and educate their children? Isn't it true that we already have more acres under cultivation than are needed—because PEOPLE CAN'T AFFORD TO BUY THE WHOLE AMOUNT OF WHAT ALREADY IS PRODUCED? Won't this competition make it harder for all farmers to earn a living?

"THE SUBMARGINAL FARMER WEARS HIS SHOES JUST AS THIN AS THE SHOES OF THE UNEMPLOYED CITY WORKER."

"Just moving from the farm to the city, or from the city to the farm, offers no escape," thoughtful persons comment. "There are weeds on both sides of the fence, for neither side offers the broad green peaceful meadow people hope to find. The number of Americans on relief in both city and country shows that THE SECURITY OF EITHER WAY OF LIFE IS NOT VERY SOLID UNDER OUR ECONOMIC SYSTEM as it now operates.

"We mean," they go on, "we mean that THE FARMER HAS TO STRUGGLE WITH THE SAME PROBLEMS THE CITY WORKER DOES. Take credit: Now just look at the strain in owning your own home. Look at the excessive profit margins middlemen chisel out. Look at farmers stranded by drought—and the way factory workers are stranded when a manufacturer shuts down his plant. But worst of all: Look at factory workers thrown out of jobs BECAUSE THEY'VE PRODUCED OR CAN PRODUCE MORE THAN PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO BUY—and farmers who go broke because THEY TOO HAVE PRODUCED MORE THAN PEOPLE CAN AFFORD TO BUY.

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"City people and rural people plainly depend on one another. And plainly they are facing exactly the same proposition: HOW CAN WE USE OUR BUMPER CROPS OF SHIRTS AND WHEAT?

"When we figure that out, city and country standards of living will be closer together. MORE PEOPLE WILL HAVE MORE of the things they need."

What other points of comparison between city and rural life can you think of?

Is there any reason why farmers should not live as well as city people who have HIGH STANDARDS?

How closely should farmers COOPERATE with city workers in attacking problems AFFECTING THEM BOTH?

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MORE ABOUT FARM AND CITY LIVING

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

WEALTH—A MATTER OF LIFE AS WELL AS ECONOMICS. Educational Research Project Fifteen, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1936. $0.15.

THE ECONOMIC SCALE—UP OR DOWN? Educational Research Project Fifteen, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago., Ill. 1936. $0.15.

HOUSING. Building America, 425 W. 123rd St., New York City. 1935. $0.30.

HOMES FOR WORKERS. Federal Public Works Administration. Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. Forthcoming.

TOWARD FULLER LIVING. A. Goldfeld. National Public Housing Conference, 112 E. Nineteenth Street, New York City. 1935. $0.10.

HOW THE OTHER HALF IS HOUSED. Rupert Vance. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. $0.15.

A PICTURE-BOOK ABOUT THE COSTS OF MEDICAL CARE. Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1935. Free.

WHO SHOULD PAY THE DOCTOR BILLS? H. L. Ewbank and M. P. Anderson. Stencil Circular No. 174. Extension Service, College of Agriculture, Madison, Wis. 1936. $0.05.

FUNDAMENTAL FACTS ON THE COST OF MEDICAL CARE. I. S. Falk. Milbank Memorial Fund. 40 Wall Street, New York City. Free.

THE ABILITY TO PAY FOR MEDICAL CARE. Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1933. Free.

MEDICAL ECONOMICS. Brooks Quimby. Pollak Foundation for Economic Research, Newton, Mass. 1935. $0.05.

HEALTH. Building America, 425 W. 123rd St., New York City. 1935. $0.30.

SCHOOL MONEY IN BLACK AND WHITE. Julius Rosenwald Fund, 4901 Ellis Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1934. Free.

OUTLOOK FOR RURAL EDUCATION. National Education Association, 1201 16th Street NW., Washington, D. C. 1931. $0.25.

WHAT KIND OF RURAL LIFE CAN WE LOOK FORWARD TO IN THE U. S.? Carl C. Taylor. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1935. Free.

THE OUTLOOK FOR RURAL YOUTH. O. E. Baker. Extension Service Circular 223, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1935. Free.

A FARM IN ILLINOIS: GEORGE WISSMILLER'S 400 ACRE PLANT. Fortune, Aug. 1935. (Mimeographed copies obtainable from the U. S. Department of Agriculture without cost.)

SECURITY FOR THE MASSES. Educational Research Project Fifteen, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1936. $0.15.

SOCIAL SECURITY FOR SOUTHERN FARMERS. H. C. Nixon. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. $0.15.

INDUSTRIAL SOCIAL SECURITY IN THE SOUTH. R. Hood. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. $0.15.

WHERE THE TALL CORN GROWS. E. H. H. Holman. Northern States Cooperative League, Minneapolis, Minn. 1934. $0.10.

YOUTH ON RELIEF. Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

ON RELIEF. Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C. 1935. Free.

RELIEF AND THE SHARECROPPER. L. P. Davis. The Survey Graphic. January 1936. 112 E. 19th St., New York City. $0.30.

THIS QUESTION OF RELIEF. Public Affairs Committee, National Press Building, Washington, D. C. 1936. $0.10.

PLANNING FOR ABUNDANCE. G. Soule. Plan Age. February 1935. 744 Jackson Place, Washington, D. C. $0.20.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1936

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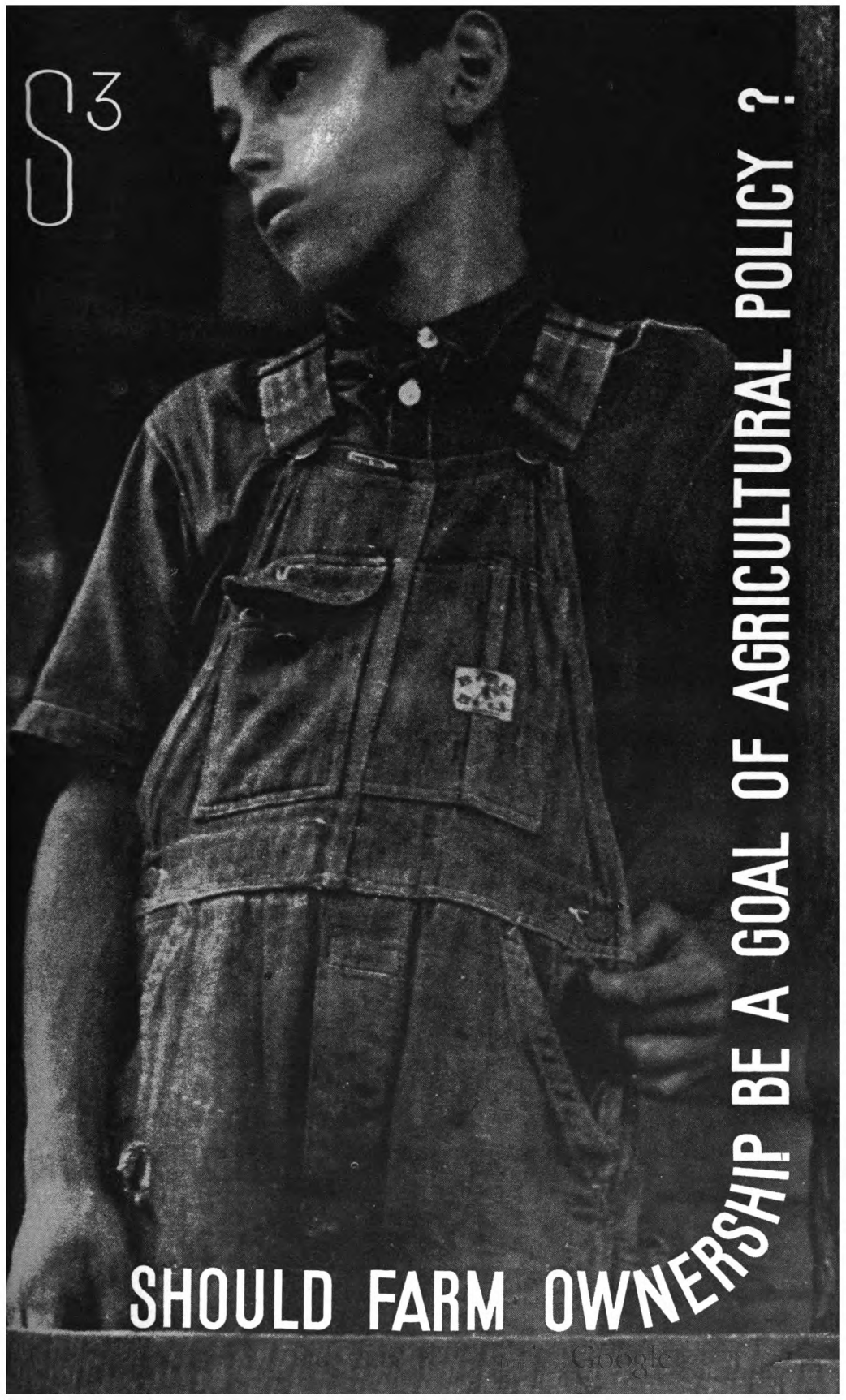
S3
SHOULD FARM OWNERSHIP BE A GOAL OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY ?

This pamphlet is the third of the materials prepared for the assistance of rural discussion groups in 1936–37 through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view or conclusion, and no statement contained herein should be construed as an official expression of the Department of Agriculture. The materials listed below attempt to present, in readable, non-technical language, discussions of issues related to rural life. Their contents are not offered as either complete or orderly presentations, but as collections of current facts and attitudes which may be of use to rural people who are thinking about these questions for themselves.

Materials have been prepared for the 1936–37 season on the following topics:

DS–1. What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
DS–2. How Do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?
DS–3. Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?
DS–4. Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
DS–5. Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
DS–6. What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
DS–7. What Kind of Agricultural Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
DS–8. What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?

Two pamphlets on technique, intended primarily for the assistance of leaders of rural discussion groups and forums, are also available:

D–1. A Brief Guide to Methods (revised 1936).
D–2. How to Organize and Conduct County Forums (revised 1936).

United States Department of Agriculture
The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photograph by Resettlement Administration)
December 1936

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SHOULD FARM OWNERSHIP BE A GOAL OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY?

Many people are now actively concerned over the growth of farm tenancy. There are a number of ways to get at the problem and a number of different ideas about what should be done. How would you answer these questions? On what do you base your point of view?

1. **Where have recent increases in farm tenancy taken place? How can you account for the increase?**
2. **Is tenancy a desirable way for a farmer to serve his apprenticeship period? Does the age of most tenants indicate that they are starting up the agricultural ladder?**
3. **Is a farmer who has some capital likely to be better off if he uses his capital to buy equipment, stock, etc., for a farm that he rents, than if he uses his capital to buy land?**
4. **What chance has a farmer without capital to become a farm owner today?**
5. **What effect does tenancy have on the soil in cash crop areas? How much land is farmed by tenants? Would the tenant-farmed areas make a broad program of soil conservation hard to put into effect?**
6. **Is tenancy any worse for the soil than speculative ownership?**
7. **Do tenants have sufficient incentive to improve their farms or should they be paid for improvements they make?**
8. **What effect does frequent moving have on ordinary home life? On school attendance?**
9. **Is special credit legislation for tenants a desirable means of helping tenants become owners?**

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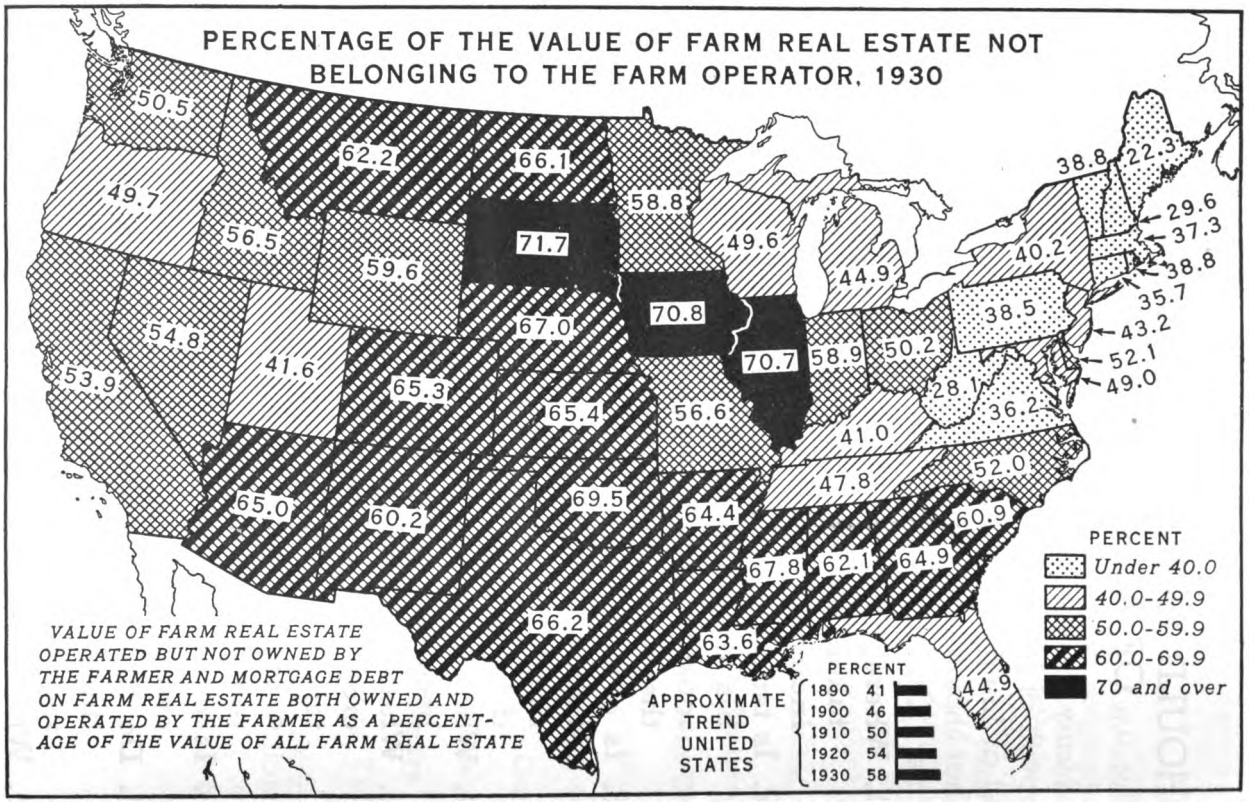

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SHOULD FARM OWNERSHIP BE A GOAL OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY?

"Farm tenancy," an old-timer in our county chose to remark at a public meeting, "farm tenancy is a worse trouble-maker than a balky mule."

"It's a balky tractor nowadays, granddad," says the youngest farmer in the group; "times are changing—you've got to keep up with the change."

"Tenancy's done no changing, except for the worse. That's why we need to think about it. Just how many of you intelligent people have any real ACCURATE ideas on tenancy? Of course, some folks say it's just a natural thing, and nothing can or ought to be done about it. Others say it's a mighty serious proposition, and something's GOT to be done about it. And there are plenty of shades of thinking and opinion in between. Probably most of 'em are right among us here, if folks will speak up and tell us how they feel. Now, when I was a boy. . . ."

The old farmer is bringing up a subject which is on the minds of lots of people. Most people in the nation agree that our tenancy ratio in some areas is too high. But what to do about it is something on which Americans are not agreed. Other nations have attacked the problem in various ways. Americans must find their own solution in their own way, in the light of their own experience and world experience. But why not look in on the discussion of this group of farmer-citizens who are so seriously concerned?

HOW WIDESPREAD IS TENANCY?

"Now—when I was a boy, I can remember mighty few tenant farmers. If a young fellow wanted to be a farmer, and he couldn't raise the capital to start out in his home parts, he just hit out for the West where there was plenty

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of land for the taking. The story is plain as day in the census figures. Back in '80, there was only about 25 percent tenancy in the whole United States. By 1910 it got up to 37 percent. And by 1930, it was headed toward 43 percent. That means that pretty near to ONE-HALF THE FARMERS IN AMERICA DO NOT OWN THE LAND THEY CULTIVATE."

"Why, I always thought that most all tenancy was in the South," remarks the young farmer's wife.

"That's not true, even though lots of folks think so." This man has done some travelling, and has seen things with his own eyes. "Tenancy has been increasing so fast in the West that it's got to be as hard a nut to crack there as in the South. Reel off the 1930 figures for the sections with the largest number of tenants, granddad."

"Well, they're bad enough to make people sit up and take notice. I'll put it like this: in the Mountain States, one farmer out of every four is a tenant; in the East North-Central area, it's getting close to a third of all farmers are tenants; and in the West North-Central States, near on to 40 percent are tenants. It begins to get sure enough bad when you get into the South-Atlantic States—one farmer out of two is a tenant. In the East South-Central States almost 56 farmers out of every 100 are tenants; and when you swing around to the West South-Central, it's getting on towards two-thirds of all the farmers are tenants!

"And in the South those figures don't mean that tenants are all Negroes, either. In fact, the ratio is about FIVE WHITES TO THREE BLACKS throughout these States. After the Civil War, southern tenants were nearly all Negroes who'd been slaves. But since then lots of small white farmers have had to become croppers and compete with the former slaves."

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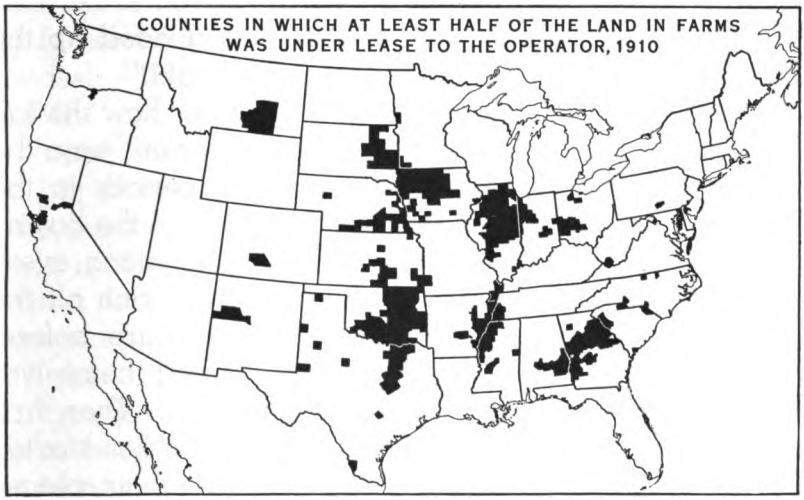

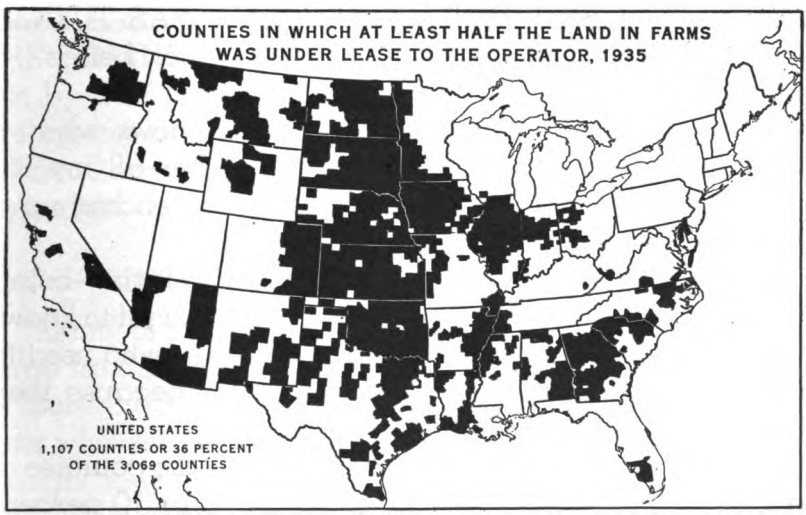

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"But what has caused all this tenancy?" asks a middle-aged farmer who is having a great deal of trouble with his mortgage. "There wasn't any tenancy in the beginning when America was settled. I can just remember that my history book used to say the Pilgrims divided up the land and every man had his share in freehold."

"Well, I don't remember the Civil War—or how the tall tale about 40 acres and a mule didn't work out," says the old timer, "but I do remember the boom periods in the West, and the speculation in land that some of the buyers had never laid eyes on. When 1914 came along every doggone farmer in America thought he'd get rich off the War. They plowed up land that was pasture before, bought more land at high prices, and slapped themselves on the back for being mighty smart fellows. Then first thing they knew the War was over. Credits started tightening up, and farmers began to lose their places through foreclosures and dispossession, so it got tighter all the time. Farmers had a hard row to hoe from 1921 on, but they didn't hit bottom till '32. In the depression MANY AN ORDINARY FARMER WHO'D HELD ON THROUGH THE 1920'S LOST WHAT HE HAD AND WAS TURNED INTO A TENANT where he'd been an owner before. I guess you get the drift."

"I sure do," answers the farmer who knows what it means to have his place mortgaged. "After all my life of sweat and work, it would be mighty tough ending up a tenant on my own farm!"

"Specially with a corporation owning your farm—being your boss," another farmer states plainly, "I ought to know, because I'm renting from a bank. The fellow who used to own the place is on relief, now. I'm there because they thought I'd do a better job."

"I heard, when I was travelling, that in some counties of the lower Mississippi Black Lands as much as 10 percent of the land is corporation owned—and in the Middle West some counties run as high or even higher."

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"CORPORATION OWNERSHIP OF FARMS BY FORECLOSURE IS INCREASING ALL THE TIME. It's just another sign of change," sighs granddad.

"It's harder trying to own a farm, now," inserts the youngest farmer. "Look at me; I'm 28, and I'm just started. My father had his own farm at 24, and a couple of kids besides! THE LADDER IS HARDER AND HARDER TO CLIMB."

"In the South, the small farmer has a hard time bucking the big plantation," contributes the much-travelled man. "The banks are geared to finance the plantations, and credit isn't easy to get for the other fellows. A tenant just stays a tenant without any hope of rising. And it's ten times worse for a sharecropper."

"I don't think it's as bad as you say," emphatically remarks a large landholder. "Credit isn't so hard to get if you're honest and industrious. I think these tenants are sharecroppers BECAUSE THEY ARE SHIFTLESS AND NO-ACCOUNT! No wonder there's so much tenancy when there are so many irresponsible people!"

"I can't agree on that," replies the old man. "It looks to me like THE TENANT SYSTEM HAS MADE PEOPLE SHIFTLESS, INSTEAD OF SHIFTLESS PEOPLE MAKING THE TENANT SYSTEM! Of course, it works both ways. But by and large I'd say the big owners were bound by the system almost as much as the little fellows. It's not all good or all bad. That's one thing making it so hard to figure out."

WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT THE TENANT SYSTEM?

"Plenty of tenants will tell you tenancy isn't all bad," the large landholder emphasizes.

"Sure," assents a man who rents for cash; "I know tenants who decided to be tenants on purpose, because they thought they could come out better in the long run. They decided to put their money into work stock and rent land, because the price of land you rent can be changed from year to year as market prices change, while interest and

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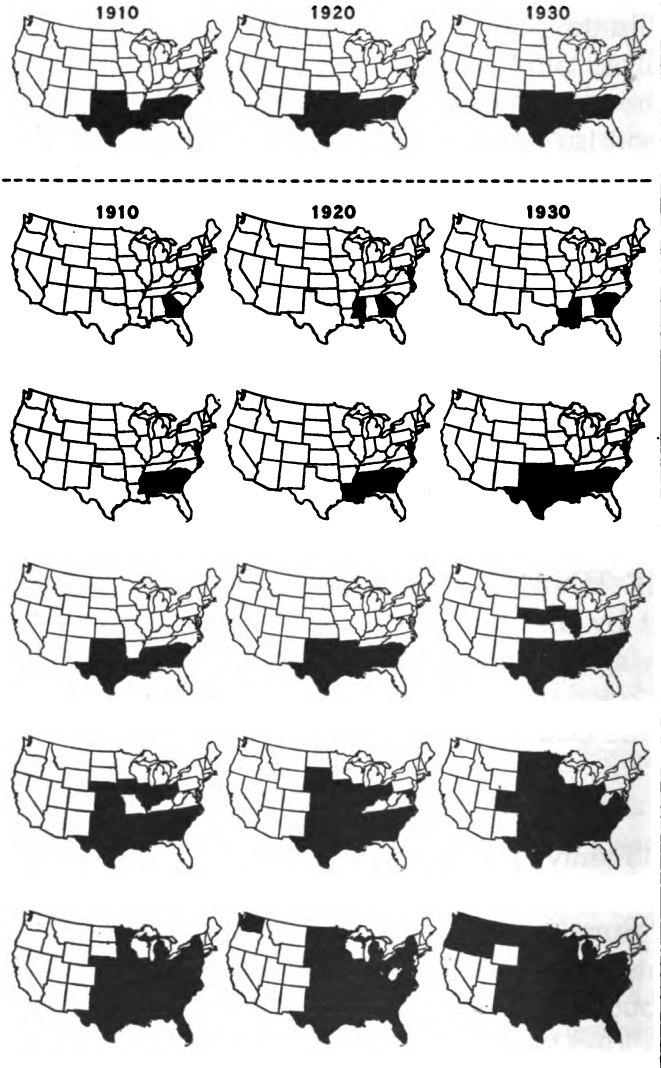
AGE OF FARMERS IN RELATION TO TENURE

STATES IN WHICH AT LEAST HALF THE FARMERS WERE TENANTS



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taxes on land you buy stay where they were even though market prices may be bobbing around like a cork in a pond full of fish."

"There's another reason why tenancy's a good thing," another farm owner agrees. "I started as a tenant, and it gave me valuable experience as well as time to accumulate enough working capital to start out for myself. I'll be honest when I say it was a tight squeeze, and the whole family had to work hard with me and save, but we did it, and now our farm belongs to us."

"You take good care of your place, too, and especially your soil," asserts the large owner. "I don't think I ever saw a better farmer for planting legumes and looking out for gulleys. You've got a farm to be proud of."

"I am proud of it. I've got a real home, a place where I like to think my boys and girls are growing up."

"Yes," pursues the old man, "and THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF MANY TENANT FARMERS HAVE NO CHANCE OF A HOME, in the best sense of that word 'home.' "

WHAT IS BAD ABOUT THE TENANT SYSTEM?

"Well, no wonder!" exclaims the young farmer's wife; "what kind of a home—no matter how poor—do you think you could have if you were moving about all the time! Imagine yanking your children in and out of schools every few years, and trying to make new friends in a new community, and start all over!"

"She's put her finger on one of the worst things about tenancy—the constant shifting," assents the large landholder. "THE AVERAGE TENANT LEASE OVER THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS ONLY THREE YEARS, and you know as well as I do how many get itching feet and hit the road after a single growing season. Think how much trouble and waste of time that makes for the landlord! Think how little that encourages the tenant farmer to make improvements on the place! Think how it does encourage him to run through soil resources and then move on to another farm!"

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"Well, I don't know as I blame the tenant," says the farmer who rents from the bank; "why should he make improvements on somebody else's land, when he never gets paid for those improvements? Why should he trouble with soil conservation practices when he's usually so pinched for money it's all he can do to get along? And if he can't raise a big cash crop and sell it for enough to get himself out of debt at the year's end, where does that leave him for all his work? I'll tell you where: it leaves him with the landlord cussing him for being a sorry farmer!"

"What worries me more," the young woman continues, "are the terrible houses tenants have to put up with. Why, IT'S PRETTY HARD FOR A FAMILY TO KEEP IN GOOD HEALTH UNDER AVERAGE TENANT CONDITIONS. It's as plain as the nose on your face why so many tenant children are puny."

"Tenant houses are often dumps as bad as city slums," the traveller adds. "Everybody knows all about how pellagra and other diseases are caused in the South by lack of the right kind of food, too. Many sharecroppers just don't have gardens. They get 'furnish' from the plantation-store or one like it, and pay higher prices than they ought."

"Do they, when you take account of how much it costs to carry them? Do you think that's easy on the planter?" counters the big farmer. "After all, who takes the risk?"

"I certainly wouldn't say the landlord takes ALL the risk," puts in a farmer who is speaking for the first time. "I'm a tenant, now, though I've been a farm owner. I'm middle-aged, I've worked hard, and what have I got to show for it? And there are plenty others like me who deserve a better break than they got. What we've gone and done in our country is this: WE'VE MADE PROPERTY MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE MAN ON THE PROPERTY. And the thing worrying me most is that I've got a boy who wants to be a farmer. WHAT CHANCE HAS HE TO OWN A FARM? If it's been so tough for me, WHAT WILL IT BE FOR HIM? That's why I say THE

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TENANT TAKES A RISK—a risk bigger than losing a sack of meal and a keg of molasses!"

"There's a bigger risk than the one the landlord takes, and a bigger risk than the one the tenant takes," the old man says carefully; "it's THE RISK THE NATION TAKES. What is to be the future of our country if we continue to increase the thoughtless, half-educated, half-starved people we try to call free American farmers? If a democracy is to work, folks must have decent lives and must learn how to think or the whole thing'll go crashing down. IF WE BELIEVE IN A DEMOCRACY—and we say we do—HOW CAN WE PROVIDE ACCESS TO LAND OWNERSHIP IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THAT DEMOCRACY?"

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT TENANCY?

He pauses, then continues, "If agricultural adjustment, a bad credit system, and new machinery all throw tenants down the ladder a step, making them field hands again, and you get more field hands than there is employment—why what's to become of them? ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH JUST PUTTING JOBLESS FARMERS ON RELIEF?"

"Wouldn't the worst features of tenancy be eliminated if farms were organized on a factory basis—that is, into great corporations which could operate efficiently under skilled management?" suggests the large landowner.

"I've seen some wheat farms and cotton plantations like that," adds the much-travelled man.

"But what becomes of the farm home under that kind of a set-up?" asks the young woman.

"What has happened to the farm home in high tenancy areas today?" answers granddad. "The answer has already been given: Where most tenants have to live isn't fit to live in. Why would tenancy on a corporation farm be any improvement? It's pretty plain from the homes of industrial workers that some corporations don't give a hang how their people live."

The youngest farmer looks thoughtful. "Isn't there some way of controlling speculation, and making credit avail-

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able to tenants on reasonable terms? Could we use machinery cooperatively, without such a drain on the individual pocketbook? In a cooperative set-up every farmer would be both a tenant and an owner."

"Why change?" the big landholder proposes, "hasn't the old system been good enough? Hasn't it brought stability, made our democracy what it is, kept the people sane and hard-working?"

"In my time," adds the old man, "the Government owned a great deal of land. Then it turned the land loose to individuals to do with as they wanted. What are some of the results? Well, terrible pressure to make a living—and from that pressure: gulleys in the South and dust storms in the West, booms and land speculation, production of farm products greater than market demand, and—part and parcel of the whole thing—TENANCY."

The young man nods his head. "The Government is already buying up submarginal lands—but what we really need to protect is good land—not bad land."

"What we also need is TO PROTECT THE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY WORK THE LAND," the old farmer declares. "I think we can all agree on that."

"But what's the thing nearest in sight for helping tenants?" asks the young woman.

"Well, Congress has been doing an awful lot of talking about a special bill to help farm tenants," a tenant replies. "I've been watching it pretty close. It works on the general principle of the financial help farmers already have: loans through the Federal Land Banks and the Farm Credit Administration. But this would be for the special purpose of making loans to tenants so they can buy their own farms."

"But how could they ever pay it off?" asks the young farmer.

"Low interest and very long amortization. And just as important, the Government is to retain title until the whole debt is paid. That will cut out the hungry land-grabbers."

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"It looks to me like putting out a great deal of money to irresponsible people," the large landowner states. "Will the Government ever collect, or will the loans just turn out to be gifts to the shiftless?"

"That depends on the way the loans are made. Many tenant farmers, and sharecroppers especially, need help on good farm management. That's not impossible. There are a number of private and Government experiments that have worked out very well along those lines."

The old farmer joins in the discussion: "This thing is harder than erosion to control, because it's harder to see how it starts and what's to be done about it. But of one thing we're all certain: IT IS TO THE BEST INTEREST OF EVERY ONE OF US THAT SOMETHING BE DONE ABOUT TENANCY—and in one way or another, eventually EVERY ONE OF US MUST PLAY A PART IN WHAT IS DONE."

Can you think of any angles on farm tenancy missed by these people?

Which points of view do you agree with? WHY?

Is it true that the "no-account" type of tenant farmer has made the tenant system what it is? Or is it true that the system has made the "no-account" tenant what he is? Or both?

What do you think is the BEST WAY to get at the UGLY SIDES of tenancy?

Are individual small holdings economically sound or should they be grouped and farmed cooperatively as a large plantation?

Do you think changes in our TENANT SYSTEM will be necessary if we are to MAINTAIN AND ADVANCE THE AMERICAN IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY? If so, WHY?

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MORE ABOUT FARM TENANCY

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

Many studies on local tenancy problems are available at Agricultural Experiment Stations and State Agricultural Colleges.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., has a series of charts on tenancy, available upon request without cost.

THE OWNERSHIP OF TENANT FARMS IN THE UNITED STATES. H. A. Turner, U. S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin 1432. Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 1926. $0.10.

THE COLLAPSE OF COTTON TENANCY. W. Alexander, E. R. Embree, C. S. Johnson. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1935. $0.35.

THE OWNERSHIP OF TENANT FARMS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL STATES. H. A. Turner. U. S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin 1433. Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D. C. 1926. $0.10.

THE PLIGHT OF THE SHARE-CROPPER. Norman Thomas. The League for Industrial Democracy, New York City. 1934. $0.10.

HUMAN PROBLEMS IN ACREAGE REDUCTION. Calvin B. Hoover. Mimeographed report to the Secretary of Agriculture. Washington, D. C. 1934. Free.

FARM TENANCY AND THE BANKHEAD-JONES BILL. James G. Maddox. The AAA Land Policy Review, Land Use Planning Section, Resettlement Administration, Washington, D. C. Vol. I, No. 3. April, 1935. Free.

THE FARMERS' HOME BILL. American Liberty League, National Press Building, Washington, D. C. Document #36. May 1935. Free.

THE SHARE-CROPPER BEGINS TO THINK. Edward Angly. Today, New York City. Vol. 4, No. 1. April 27, 1935. $0.10.

COTTON GROWING COMMUNITIES. Study No. 1. B. Y. Landis and G. E. Haynes. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 105 E. 22nd St., New York City. March 1934. $0.15.

COTTON GROWING COMMUNITIES. Study No. 2. B. Y. Landis and G. E. Haynes. The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 105 E. 22nd St., New York City. September 1935. $0.15.

THE FARM TENANCY SITUATION. James G. Maddox. Land Use Planning Section, Resettlement Administration, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

THE TENANT FARMER IN THE SOUTH. R. C. Beatty and G. M. O'Donnell. The American Review, New York City. April 1935. $0.40.

HOW WISCONSIN FARMERS BECOME OWNERS. B. H. Hibbard and G. A. Peterson. Agricultural Experiment Station, Madison, Wisconsin. Bulletin No. 402. 1928. Free.

REFORMS NEEDED IN TENANT SYSTEM. Karl E. Ashburn. The Texas Weekly, Dallas, Texas. Vol. XI, No. 12. March 23, 1935. $0.10.

REVOLT AMONG THE SHARE-CROPPERS. Howard Kester. Covici Friede, New York City. 1936. $0.50.

LOOK AWAY, DIXIE LAND! Russell Lord. The Country Home, Springfield, Ohio. Vol. 59, No. 3. March 1935. $0.05.

THE FARM TENANT AND HIS RENTING PROBLEMS. O. R. Johnson. University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri. Agricultural Experiment Station. Bulletin No. 315. 1932. Free.

BURYING GROUND FOR HUMAN VALUES. Donald F. Fenn. The Southern Workman, Hampton, Va. Vol. LVII, No. 6. June 1928. $0.10.

ECONOMIC PHASES OF EROSION CONTROL IN SOUTHERN IOWA. R. Schickele. Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa. Bulletin No. 333. June 1935. Free.

LANDLORD AND TENANT ON COTTON PLANTATIONS. T. J. Woofter and others. Works Progress Administration, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

THE FARM LEASE CONTRACT. L. C. Gray and H. A. Turner. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Farmers, Bulletin No. 1164. 1930. Free.

FARM TENANCY IN THE UNITED STATES 1925–1935. Agricultural Economics Bibliography No. 59. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. Free.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1936

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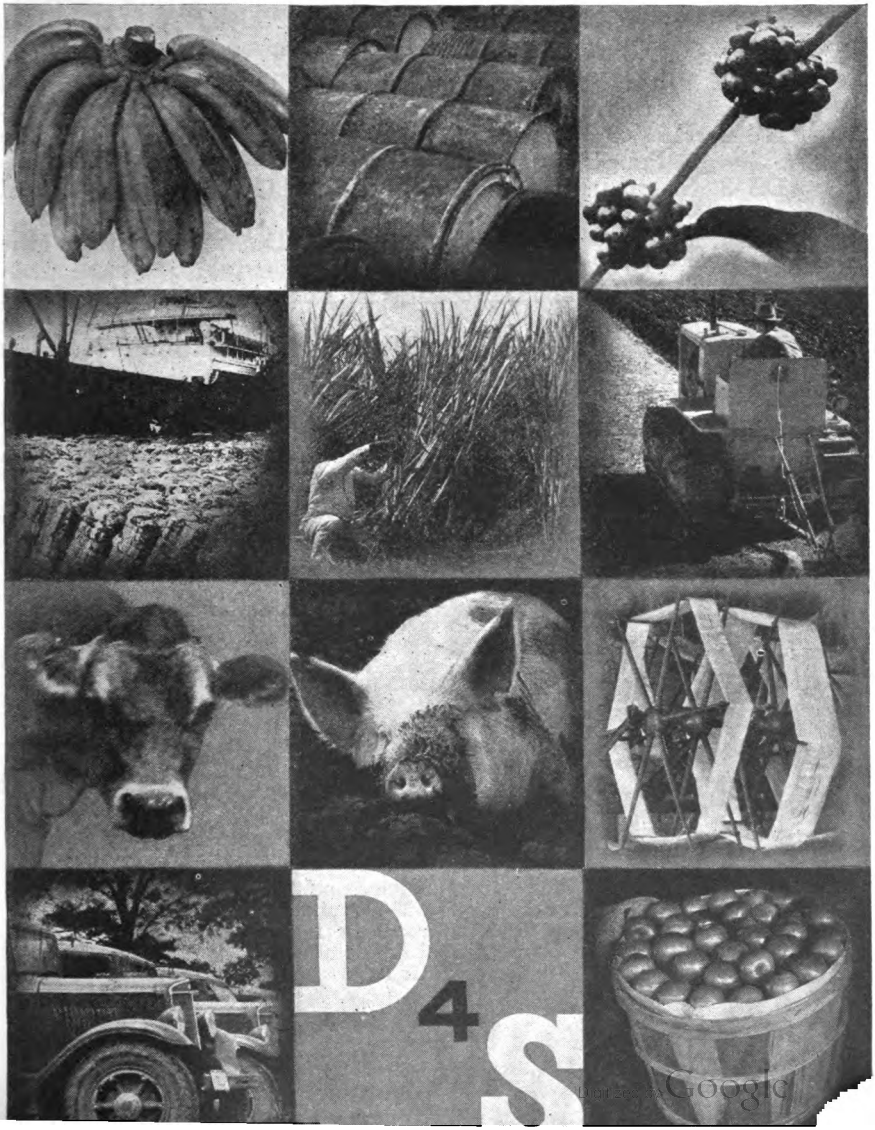
DS-4

EXPORTS AND IMPORTS

HOW DO THEY AFFECT THE FARMER?



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This pamphlet is the fourth of the materials prepared for the assistance of rural discussion groups in 1936–37 through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view or conclusion, and no statement contained herein should be construed as an official expression of the Department of Agriculture. The materials listed below attempt to present, in readable, nontechnical language, discussions of issues related to rural life. Their contents are not offered as either complete or orderly presentations, but as collections of currents facts and attitudes which may be of use to rural people who are thinking about these questions for themselves.

Materials have been prepared for the 1936–37 season on the following topics:

DS–1. What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
DS–2. How Do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?
DS–3. Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?
DS–4. Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
DS–5. Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
DS–6. What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
DS–7. What Kind of Agricultural Policy is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
DS–8. What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?

Two pamphlets on technique, intended primarily for the assistance of leaders of rural discussion groups and forums, are also available:

D–1. A Brief Guide to Methods (revised 1936).
D–2. How to Organize and Conduct County Forums (revised 1936).

United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photographs by Resettlement Administration, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Agriculture)
December 1936

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EXPORTS AND IMPORTS—HOW DO THEY AFFECT THE FARMER?

Many different proposals are being voiced today on American foreign trade policy. Below is a brief list of some of the main views heard. Does one of them represent your point of view? Why?

1. **The American tariff should prevent agricultural imports from competing with the products of American farmers.**
2. **The tariff on industrial imports should be lowered; then American farmers would no longer have to pay high prices in a protected market.**
3. **The industrial tariff protects the standard of living of American wage earners, the farmers' best customers. Therefore the government should maintain the tariff and make benefit payments to American farmers to give them an equivalent of tariff protection.**
4. **The Federal government should subsidize the export of all crops and livestock not required for domestic consumption at fair prices.**
5. **The United States should reduce both exports and imports to a minimum and be as nearly self-sufficient as possible.**
6. **The United States should not give up its world trade, but should manage its sales and purchases by a series of barter arrangements.**
7. **The United States should make reciprocal treaties with other nations to increase the world exchange of goods and services.**
8. **Tariff exclusion leads to trade wars, and trade wars lead to military wars. What we need is a tariff policy that promotes peaceful trade in a world at peace.**

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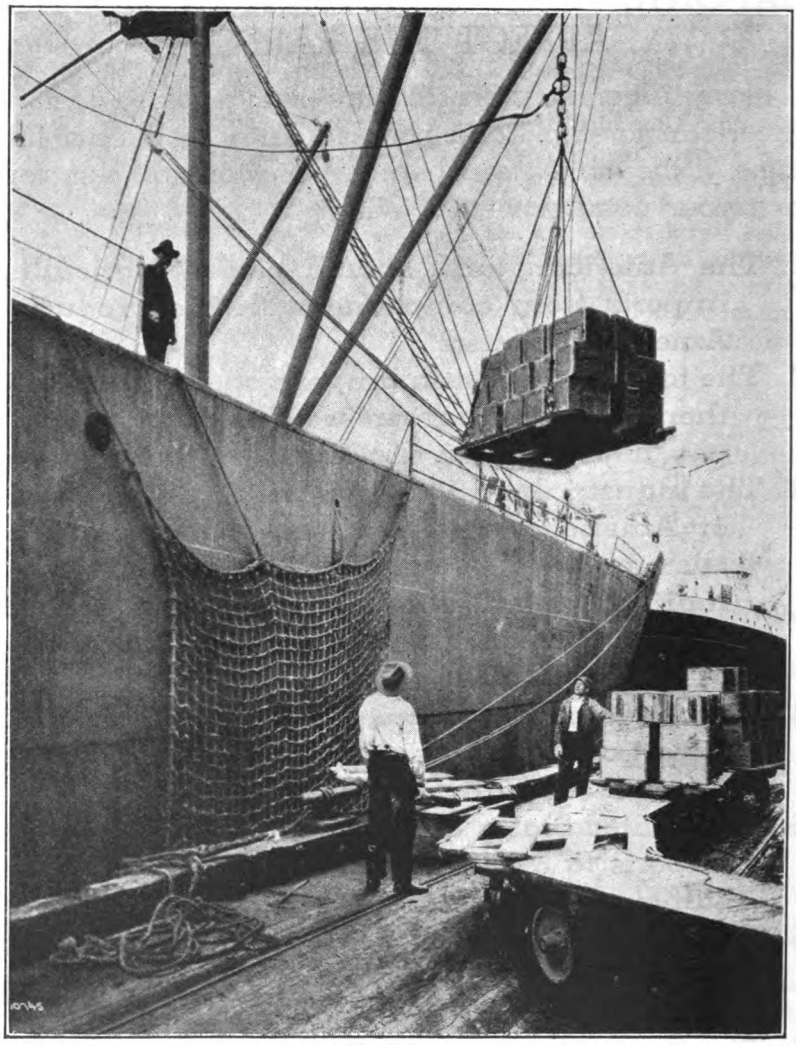

What's To Be Done About Our Foreign Trade?

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EXPORTS AND IMPORTS—HOW DO THEY AFFECT THE FARMER?

SHOULD IMPORTS BE LET IN OR KEPT OUT?

Some people say, every dollar that American citizens pay out for foreign goods is a dollar put into foreigners' pockets, a dollar that ought to go into the pockets of our own American producers. These people WOULD LIKE TO SEE IMPORTS CUT till they were next to nothing. Then, say they, American producers could produce for the whole American market, which is, after all, the biggest market in the world.

Other people don't agree with them. The American market, they admit, is a sizeable market, but even the American market hasn't enough purchasing power to buy all the goods that our farms and our factories are equipped to produce. The farms which produce our big staple crops, and the factories that produce our best known types of machinery, have until recently made a good part of their living from sales abroad. If we cut down on our imports, foreign purchasers will have fewer chances to earn the dollars that they have to earn if they are to buy our goods. And if their chances to earn dollars are cut off, HOW CAN FOREIGNERS PAY THE AMERICAN EXPORT FARMER AND THE AMERICAN EXPORT MANUFACTURER? Won't our exporters have to go out of business or else get domestic subsidies, either in prices or in Government payments, to make up for foreign losses?

"Isn't there another angle to this question?" asks a third group. "WHAT ABOUT AMERICAN CONSUMERS? Where does their interest lie? Suppose we did keep out imports. What would happen to prices of the goods we we kept out?"

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OUR CHIEF IMPORTS

"We can get a line on that easily enough by looking at the import figures," suggests a statistically minded member of the discussion circle. "Our imports of all sorts of goods in 1935 amounted to $2,039,000,000. Of this amount, $1,106,000,000 represented agricultural products. We spent $137,000,000 for coffee, $133,500,000 for cane sugar, $119,000,000 for rubber, $96,000,000 for silk, $79,000,000 for vegetable oils. . . ."

"Just what I was going to say," interrupts the champion of the consumer. "Those are products that are used every day by millions of Americans, and products that grow best in tropical climates. If we tried to grow the quantities we now use at home, prices would rise right out of sight. Of course we might make up our minds not to use these things and substitute products that are easier to grow in this country. But what would the average American say if he came down to breakfast in the morning and found his ham and eggs there all right, but discovered that his coffee cup was full of milk? Or if he went out to his car and found it all there but the tires?"

COMPETITIVE FARM IMPORTS

"Hold on a minute," counters a representative of the first group to speak. "What you say may be all right as far as those particular commodities go, but WE IMPORT A LOT OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS THAT ARE JUST THE SAME AS THOSE WE GROW HERE AT HOME. If you'd let our statistical friend go on with his list of last year's import figures, you'd find such products right up at the top. Look at the wheat, and the butter and the cheese and the cattle that have been piling in over our tariffs these last years, to be sold right in front of the noses of our own wheat growers, cattle raisers, and dairymen. Why should these commodities be allowed to fill the market when our own farms are big producers of exactly the same goods?"

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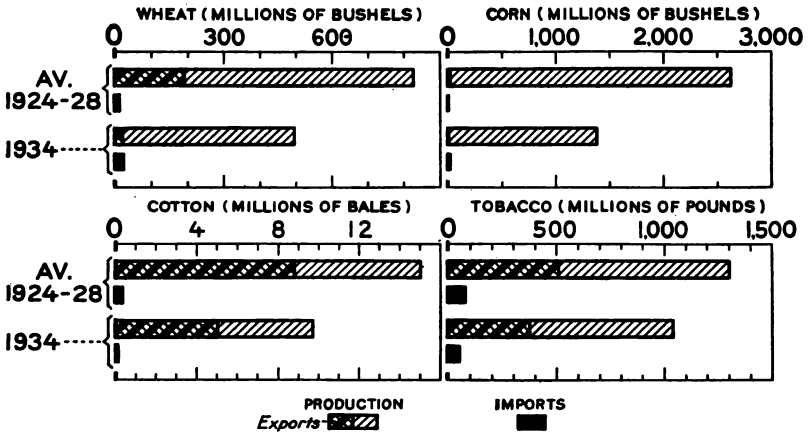
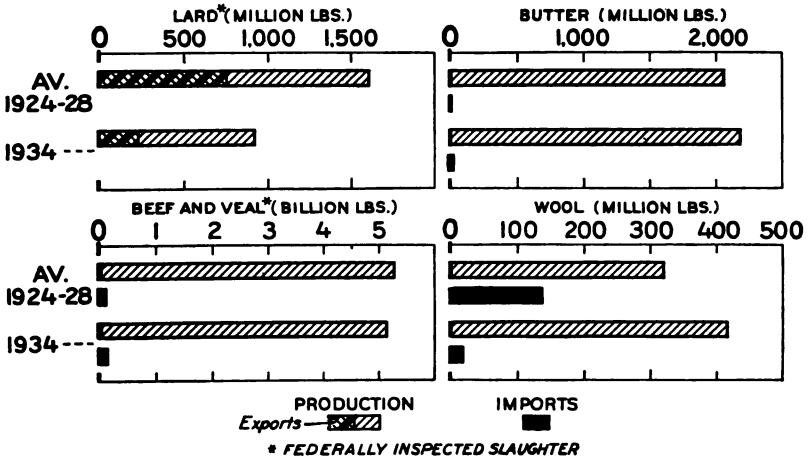
U. S. Production, Exports, and Imports of Wheat, Corn, Cotton, and Tobacco



U. S. Production, Exports, and Imports of Livestock Products



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"Wait a second," breaks in the statistically minded member. "HAVE THESE IMPORTS REALLY BEEN FILLING OUR HOME MARKET? And have our own farms been big producers during the seasons when we've had big imports? If you look at our competitive farm imports during the years when they've been biggest, what percentage of domestic production have they been? Is it fair to say that foreign goods are taking the domestic market in years when domestic production falls way below normal, because of droughts such as we've been having or for some other reason?"

"It certainly is fair," comes a prompt rejoinder. "Suppose American farmers do have a smaller crop than usual. That means less income unless prices rise. Why shouldn't the man who has seen most of his crop burn up in the ground get all that he can for the little that he does succeed in harvesting? Why should foreign-grown crops come in and break the market that is his only hope of catching up on income?"

PROTECTION FOR CONSUMERS

"Then what about the income of the people who have to pay SCARCITY PRICES," retorts the champion of the consumer. "When food is available from other countries, why should city people, and lots of farmers too, either go without or pay prices that make big cuts in their standard of living? It isn't as though the farm products that are raised in this country didn't have any protection. Take the case of wheat. We import two kinds of wheat, wheat for feed and wheat for food. The duty on wheat for feed is 10 percent ad valorem; the duty on wheat for food is 42¢ per bushel. That 42¢ per bushel was more than 100 percent of the farm price of wheat in 1932. It was still over 40 percent of the price of wheat in 1936. If the farmer has protection up to a big percent of his price, ISN'T THE CONSUMER ENTITLED TO PROTECTION when prices get high enough for foreign products to come in over that barrier? Are the farmers who want to keep out wheat for food equally keen about keeping out wheat for feed?

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Or do they see the consumer's point of view better when it comes to something they use on their own farms?"

IMPORTS AND RECOVERY

"Haven't you touched on another reason for the recent increase in imports besides the drought," inquires a member of the group who has been quiet up to this point. "Some of the recent increases have clearly been due to the drought. But is that the whole story? The member who spoke for the consumer said that the tariff on wheat in 1932 was just about the same as the American price. Now what I want to know is, didn't that price have something to do with the low imports of wheat during the depression years? Those were years of big carry-over and small purchasing power on the part of the American people. A 38¢ wheat market isn't an attractive market. And a population that can't absorb more wheat than was sold in 1932 at 38¢ certainly isn't going to have much money to spend on other things. When all sales are low, imports are bound to be low. And by the same token, when all sales start up, aren't imports likely to rise too, reflecting people's capacity both to buy more, and to buy certain kinds of products—like quality grades of cheese, for instance—that they just scratch off the menu when times are hard? I think our statistical friend here will bear out what I say."

"Exactly," the statistically minded member agrees. "If you look at what has happened to imports of competitive agricultural products, gross farm income, and value of industrial production during the years since the war, you'll see that their movements up and down follow each other quite closely. Good times for domestic producers in the United States and good times for foreign exporters to the United States come and go together.

"If that's true for the United States, moreover, isn't it likely to be true for other countries? Instead of worrying about imports coming into this country, wouldn't we do better to see if we can't TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RECOVERING PRICE LEVELS and revived purchasing power all over the world to do some exporting?"

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BARTER AGREEMENTS

"Right you are," comes from a member of the export-farmers group. "What we need is to take stock of our surpluses and see if we can't get rid of them by MAKING TRADES WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES. We ought to go to a country that needs our goods and say, What have you that we need that you'll swap with us for our pork products, or our tobacco? And so on for our other surplus products. If we made trades like that we'd be sure of being paid, we'd know exactly what we were getting, and we'd be rid of surpluses that we can't sell at proper prices here at home."

"Why should that way of trading work any better in the world market than at home," a new voice inquires. "YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT TRADE TO MOVE VERY BRISKLY IF YOU BARTERED EVERYTHING you raised, would you? Isn't the big advantage of a general market that you can exchange your own specialty for just the amount you need of a number of other specialties that are made by a lot of different people? After all, the census lists some 1,900 different classes of exports. Wouldn't it be pretty hard to handle them on a barter basis?"

TARIFF REDUCTION

"Just so," a free trader jumps into the discussion. "What we need is for us to TAKE DOWN OUR TARIFF and for other countries to take down theirs and then goods could come and go between countries where they were needed just as they pass from one to another of our forty-eight states."

"That would be a mighty good thing for the farmer," adds another member of the exporters' group. "Except in times of drought or other unusual weather, we don't have to worry about supplying our domestic market ourselves. And if the present tariffs on industrial goods were taken off, think how much cheaper we farmers could get a lot of the goods we have to buy."

PROTECTION FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

"Maybe," responds the man who was urging agricultural tariffs, "but where would the city workers be if foreign

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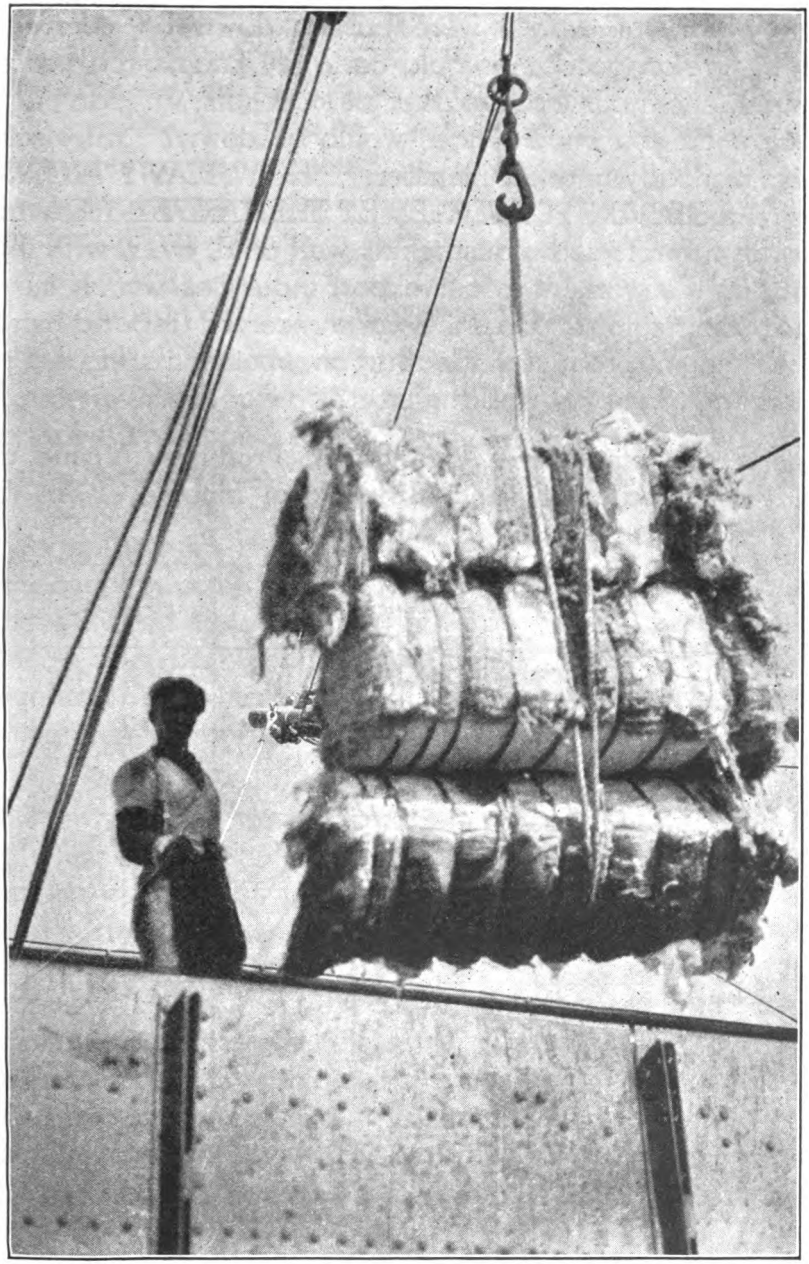

If Cotton Exports Failed, Would the Corn Belt Stretch to the Gulf?

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manufactured goods came pouring into the country. If factory workers' wages were pushed down by competition of foreign goods, it would certainly knock the props out from under our main market for foodstuffs, wouldn't it?"

"How do you know wages would go down?" interjects the statistically minded member. "HOW MANY WORKERS' WAGES ARE PROTECTED BY THE TARIFF? Are the workers in protected industries as well paid, even with the tariff, as the workers in our export industries which meet world competition? Does the wage received depend more on the type of product made than on whether its market is a home market or a world market?

Imports of Competitive Agricultural Products, Value of Industrial Production, and Gross Farm Income, 1921–35

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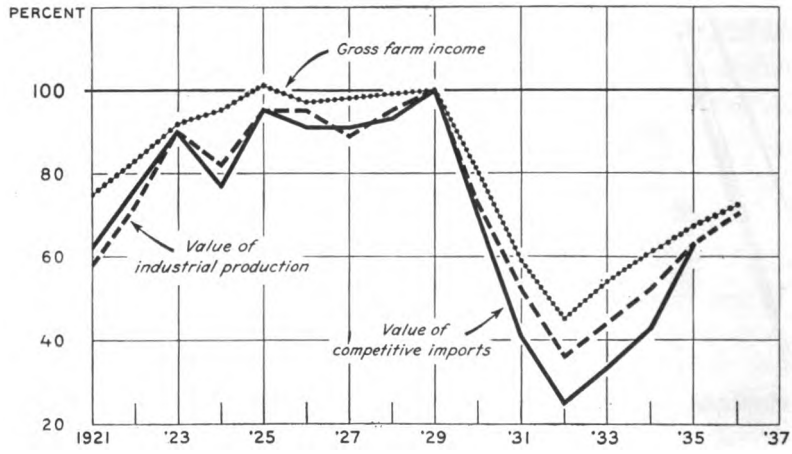

"We ought to bear in mind, too, the fact that factory employment in this country and imports of manufactured goods go up and down together just as imports of competitive agricultural products and gross farm income do. In the past, more imports have not meant fewer jobs."

RECIPROCAL TRADE TREATIES

"All the same," contributes an attentive listener, "any very sudden action is bound to be upsetting. Isn't it better to CHANGE THINGS GRADUALLY? Look at what has

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been happening the last two years under our RECIPROCAL TARIFF POLICY. We've lowered, or agreed not to increase, our duties on some of the products of one nation after another that has been willing to lower, or to agree not to increase, its duties on some of our products. In two years we have completed 14 such agreements, and the countries included are countries to which we sold 37.5 percent of our exports in 1929.

HOW BIG IS TODAY'S WORLD MARKET?

"Reciprocal treaties may be all very well in their way," comments the man who is sitting beside him, "but how much ought we to expect of them? Is there any very great relation between our world trade in the past and our prospects for world trade today? All over the world, nations are trying to be more and more SELF-SUFFICIENT, particularly in respect to some of the farm products that we used to sell abroad, and at the same time, competition in products like wheat and pork products is getting keener and keener. Oughtn't we to make up our minds that our world trade is going to be permanently smaller than it has been?"

THE OPEN DOOR AT HOME

"That's the most sensible thing I've heard," the anti-imports man bobs up again. "We've been talking as though the choice between self-sufficiency and world trade was still ours to make. Farmers who spend their time worrying about their export market are worrying about something that never amounted to a fifth of farm income and doesn't amount to 10 percent today. Our way out lies through the open door at home. If we'd spend half the energy discovering domestic outlets that we spend on recovering foreign outlets for farm products we'd begin to get somewhere."

WHAT IF THE WORLD GOES TO WAR?

"Aren't we talking in a fool's paradise," the quiet member's voice is rather startling. "Here we sit as though

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things would go on just as they have been, as though the world's unrest were not written in every day's headlines. WHAT ABOUT WAR? What would that do to our best-laid plans?"

"Well, war gave the American farmer THE BEST BUSINESS HE EVER HAD, didn't it?" one of the exporters takes up the challenge. "The DROUGHT has brought us dollar wheat all right, but lots of us haven't enough wheat to make a good thing out of it. The WAR brought us two dollar wheat, and we had wheat to sell."

"We had wheat to sell in 1918 and 1919 all right," comes a reply, "but we also had wheat to sell right through the 1920's and I ask you how much that wheat brought. I say that YOU CAN'T BLOW UP PART OF THE WORLD ECONOMIC SYSTEM WITHOUT EVERYBODY SUFFERING. A lot of us right here are farming land mortgaged out of all relation to today's prices. We made those mortgages on the strength of war markets. We're still paying on them. When farmers talk about war they need to think in terms of tomorrow's effects as well as today's profits."

"And they ought not to forget that TODAY'S TARIFF POLICY MAY HAVE LOTS TO DO WITH TOMORROW'S WAR," adds the quiet member. "Interference with trade leads to trade wars, and trade wars are mighty likely to turn into military wars. We weren't ready for the quick changes that the World War made in our balance of international trade. Our failure to handle those changes forced us onto pretty much of a self-sufficient basis, which in turn has been forcing other countries onto the same basis. Now some countries can't live at home as well as we. And when the economic life of a country gets pinched, war is on the horizon."

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And so the discussion goes. Where would you like to chip in? What ought to be said that has so far been left out?

What kind of foreign trade policy is most likely to KEEP THIS COUNTRY OUT OF WAR?

From the standpoint of the farmers' interests, should the foreign trade policy of the United States be different in war time from what it is in peace time?

Should we, or should we not, trade with nations at war? What has been OUR POLICY IN RESPECT TO NEUTRALITY at various times in our national history?

All things considered, do you favor efforts to increase our foreign trade? Decrease it? Or do you think exports and imports ought to be let alone to work themselves out without a Government policy?

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EFFICIENCY IN FARMING ALWAYS A GOOD THING ?

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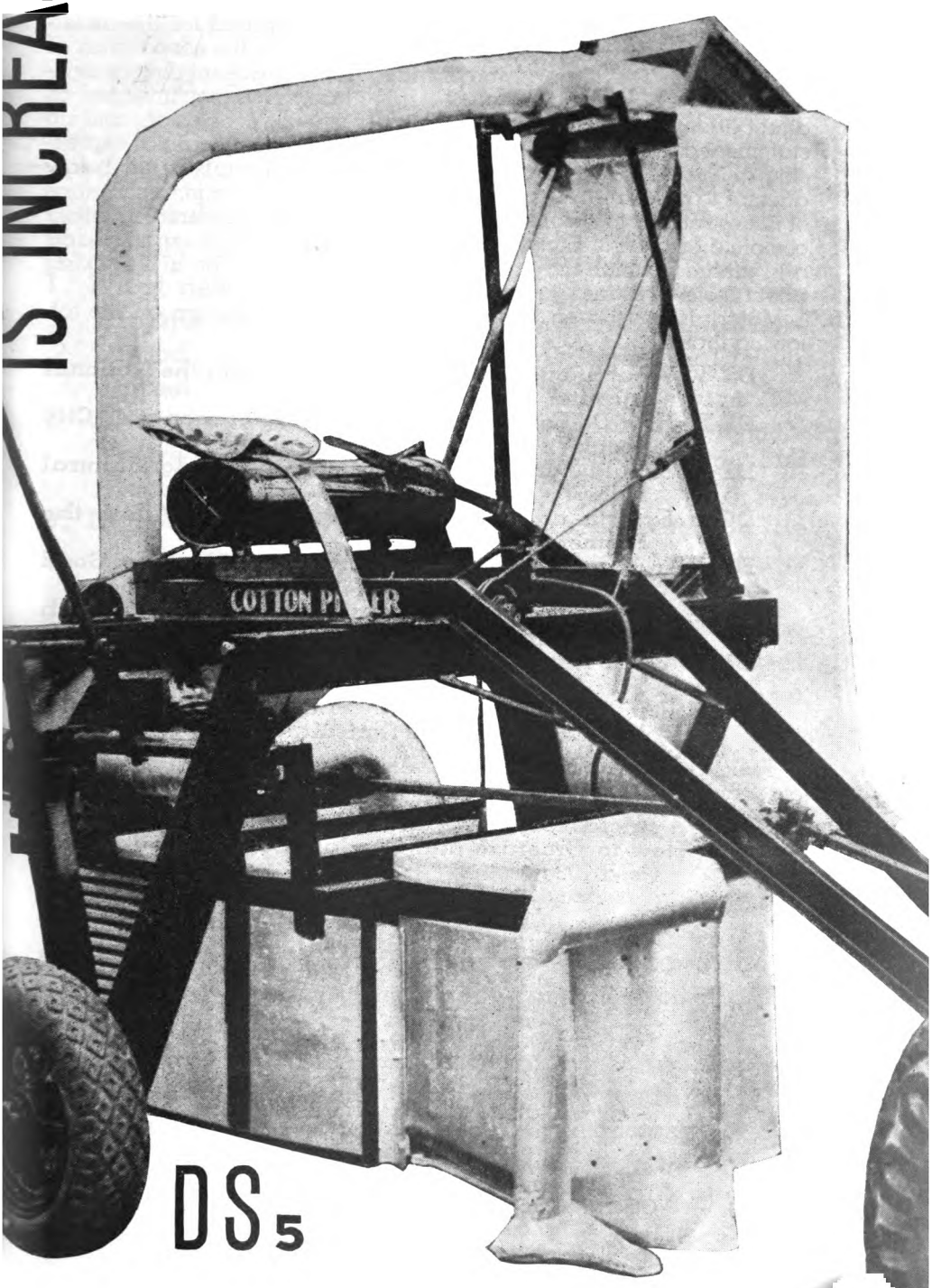

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United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Cotton Picker Photograph by the Inventors,
Other Photograph by Works Progress Administration)
December 1936

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IS INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN FARMING ALWAYS A GOOD THING?

The impact of the machine age on farms and cities has been the subject of much discussion. Where do you stand on the following questions?

1. **What new machines have been introduced on the farms and in the households of your neighborhood in recent years? What has been their effect?**
2. **What changes, other than the use of machinery, have made farming more scientific in your locality?**
3. **In your opinion, what is there to be said for the effort to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before? What against?**
4. **Do you know of cases where the building of new factories or expansion of old ones has made it possible for farm people to get jobs in towns and cities? Do you know of cases where the increased use of machinery in factories has thrown people out of jobs?**
5. **If the number of city jobs does not increase at the rate it was increasing before the depression, what will become of the children now growing up on the farms?**
6. **Do you think that the nation should provide a system of social insurance for those who can't find jobs?**
7. **How do you think machines might be used to the greater benefit of those who use them? As to efficiency? As to leisure? As to lowered prices for consumers? As to wider distribution of goods?**

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What Is Science Doing To Agriculture?
For Agriculture?

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IS INCREASED EFFICIENCY IN FARMING ALWAYS A GOOD THING?

"The trouble with farmers," says a man who spends his life in a scientific laboratory, "is that they don't keep up with the times. When the rest of the world moves on they don't even know it. They just keep doing the same old things that they've always done, year in and year out.'

"Well, if they do keep doing the same old things," a middle-aged farmer comes to the defense of his fellows, "isn't it because they have a pretty steady job? The people of the United States want to have food to eat and clothes to wear and they look to the farmer to produce them. 'Under all, the land', as we say. Looks to me like doing the same old thing is doing something pretty important."

"Sure, it's important," concedes the laboratory man, "But why should you make a ritual out of it, as though raising the country's food was something sacred? Business men don't feel that way about the things they supply for the country to consume. Why doesn't the farmer see that farming is a business? Business men stand right outside the laboratory door to see what's coming and figure out how they can use it in their business. THIS IS A SCIENTIFIC AGE. But when it comes to making use of science, THE FARMER'S AT THE TAIL-END OF THE PROCESSION."

SCIENTIFIC CHANGES ON THE FARM

"Is he, now?" a traveling salesman for a farm machinery company speaks up. "The firm I work for did a 51 million dollar business last year. That sounds as though the farmer is willing to pay good money for scientific inventions."

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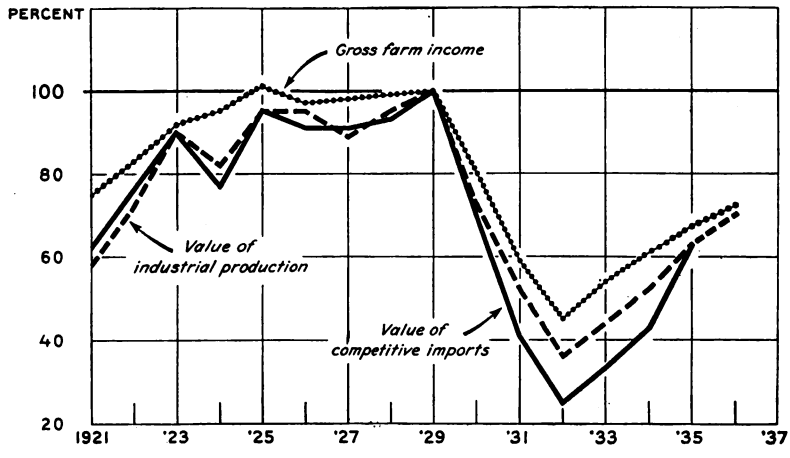
manufactured goods came pouring into the country. If factory workers' wages were pushed down by competition of foreign goods, it would certainly knock the props out from under our main market for foodstuffs, wouldn't it?"

"How do you know wages would go down?" interjects the statistically minded member. "HOW MANY WORKERS' WAGES ARE PROTECTED BY THE TARIFF? Are the workers in protected industries as well paid, even with the tariff, as the workers in our export industries which meet world competition? Does the wage received depend more on the type of product made than on whether its market is a home market or a world market?

Imports of Competitive Agricultural Products, Value of Industrial Production, and Gross Farm Income, 1921–35

[1929=100]



"We ought to bear in mind, too, the fact that factory employment in this country and imports of manufactured goods go up and down together just as imports of competitive agricultural products and gross farm income do. In the past, more imports have not meant fewer jobs."

RECIPROCAL TRADE TREATIES

"All the same," contributes an attentive listener, "any very sudden action is bound to be upsetting. Isn't it better to CHANGE THINGS GRADUALLY? Look at what has

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been happening the last two years under our RECIPROCAL TARIFF POLICY. We've lowered, or agreed not to increase, our duties on some of the products of one nation after another that has been willing to lower, or to agree not to increase, its duties on some of our products. In two years we have completed 14 such agreements, and the countries included are countries to which we sold 37.5 percent of our exports in 1929.

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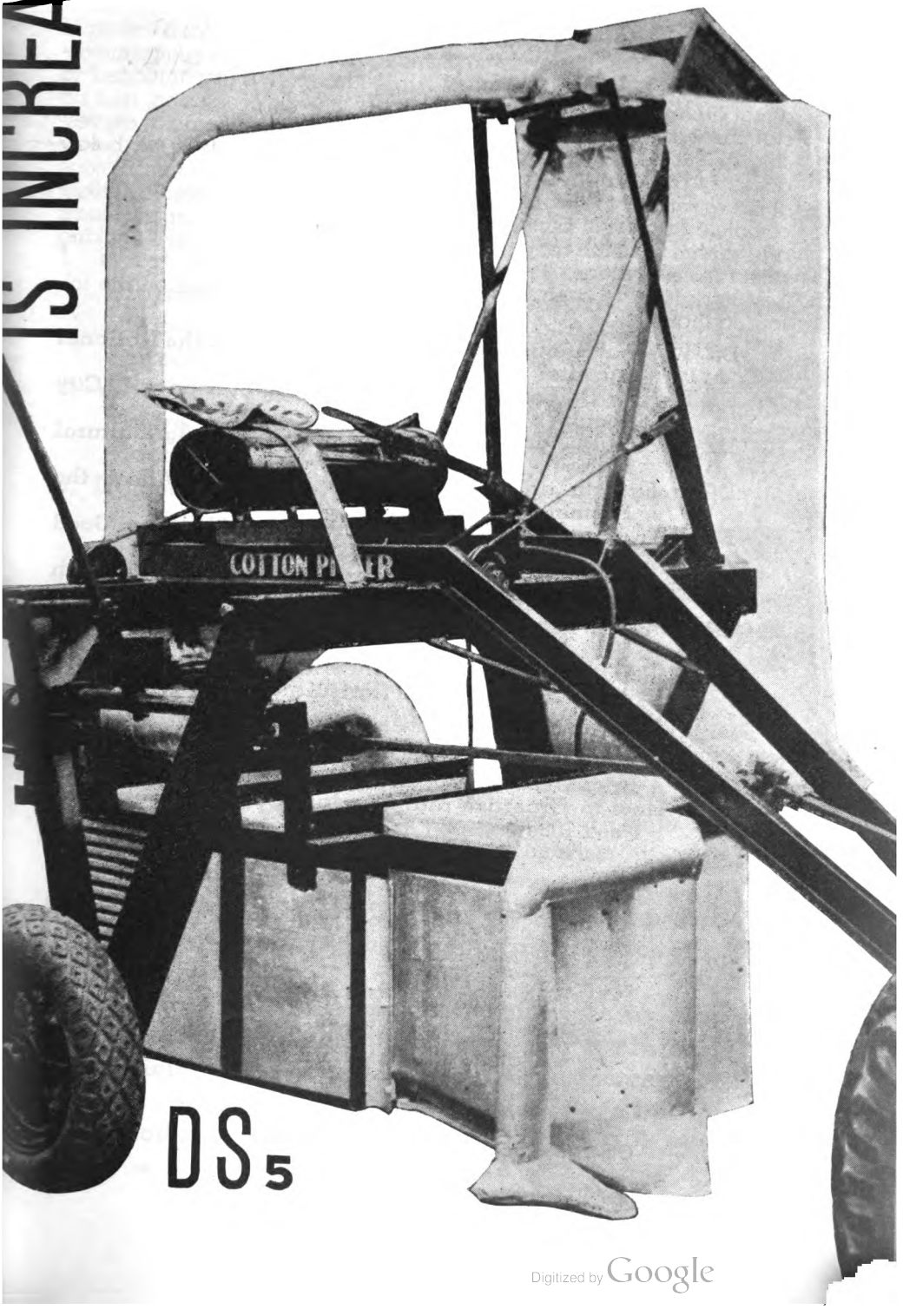

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"If you knew how farming was done when I was a boy," one of the older men in the group backs up the salesman's statement, "you'd know whether or not the farmer had taken up with NEW WAYS OF DOING THINGS. Look at the machinery that's in the shed on our farm today. Start with the tractor and all the attachments that go with it. There are nigh onto a million like it on farms in this country, and we farmers spend around 400 million dollars a year just to keep our cars and tractors going. I don't know which we'd miss most if we didn't have it, our tractors or our trucks. Didn't have either fifteen years ago, but I don't know how we'd get along without them today. Then take the changes I've seen in harvesting machinery. Fewer horses in sight nowadays, and just enough men to keep the machinery going. I remember when the railroads used to haul carloads of harvest hands jammed in like chickens in a crate."

"My folks have a place in the fruit country," a visitor takes up the tale, "and that orchard of theirs is fertilized every spring with commercial fertilizer and sprayed from a mechanical sprayer filled with carefully mixed chemicals five times every season. There's scientific farming for you."

"If you're after something that's just the last word in applied science," says a teacher who spent her summer seeing the country by bus, "you ought to see people in the South dusting cotton fields by airplane to kill the boll weevil. I've heard they dust potatoes that way in Maine, too."

NEW APPLIANCES IN THE FARM HOME

"Well, I can show you what science has done for farming without going outside my kitchen," a farmer's wife puts in a word. "First of all, there's no old oaken bucket in my life as there was in my mother's, and my family doesn't take its baths in a galvanized tub in the kitchen. If you drop in on Monday, I'll show you my washing machine in action. If it's Tuesday, you'll find me using my electric iron. Stop by

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on Wednesday, and I'll be taking some vegetables out of the pressure cooker. You might give me a ring on the telephone before you start over. Later on in the week I'll be getting at the children's new clothes and you'll hear the whir of the sewing machine. If you come at milking time, I'll take you down to the cellar a minute so you can have a look at the separator. And of course you can listen to the radio any time."

"That's quite a showing, all right," says the laboratory man, "but HOW MANY FARMERS' WIVES HAVE THE MECHANICAL HELP that you have? Not 2 farms in 10 in this country are like yours in having running water; on the other 8 farms the farmer's wife still carries into the house every drop of water she uses—and carries it out again. It's the same with electricity; only 1 farm in 9 is served by a power line. The other 8 housewives couldn't use your washing machine and electric iron even if they had them. Radios are a little more widely distributed, but at that, less than 3 out of 10 farm women can listen to music or other programs as they do their work. And not 4 out of 10 farms have telephones."

"Just the same," the salesman comes back into the picture, "I say that any group that spends 330 million dollars on implements, as farmers did last year, and supports around 31,000 city workers with a payroll of about $900,000 a week, is geared right into the machine age."

"But THE USE OF MACHINERY IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY OF SCIENCE AND THE MODERN FARMER," adds another member. "Look at all the experimental work that's done on soils, on plant and animal breeding, on diseases and pests, on farm practices, not to mention the search that's always going on for new products."

"Well, I still stick to what I said," repeats the laboratory man, "the farmer hasn't a scientific attitude, and all that's been said so far confirms my opinion. Just because in our grandfathers' time it was the job of the farmer to feed and clothe the people, farmers today keep right on thinking that that's still the only job they have to do.

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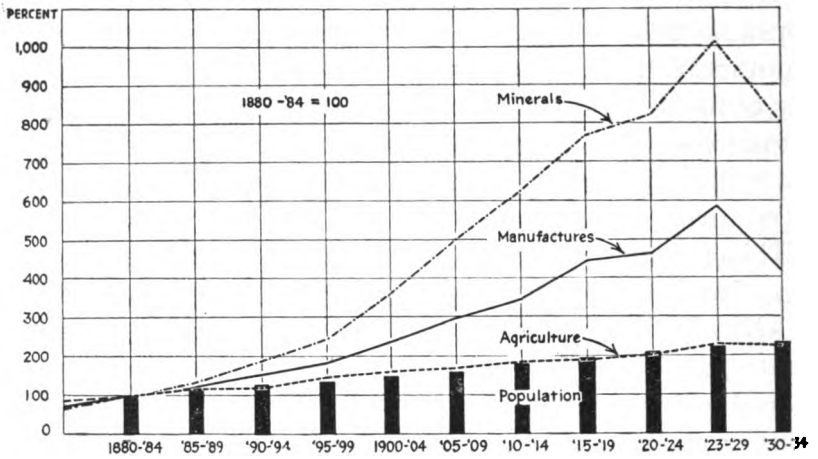
Production in Agriculture and Industry



"Now look at what's happened in the last 50 years. Agricultural production has risen gradually, just keeping pace with our increase in population. That's natural enough, since the demand for foodstuffs is just about so much per person. But if you turn from agricultural production to production of minerals, what a different story! Mineral production has shot way up above agricultural production. Production of manufactured articles, for which minerals supply the bulk of the new materials, has also mounted at a rate far in advance of population increase.

FARM MARKETS IN INDUSTRY

"That shows where economic opportunity lies. People's demands for manufactured goods are not limited the way people's demands for foodstuffs are. THE FARMER AND THE CHEMIST NEED TO GO PARTNERS, and then the farmer can sell his products as raw materials to the manufacturers of the country, and get a share of the market for what up to now have been called non-agricultural commodities."

"Yes, but AT WHAT PRICE?" challenges a man who sets a lot of store by country ways of living. "The more the farmer gets tied up with industry, the more he becomes

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just one cog in the economic machine, going round and round, doing one little specialty. The further you push efficiency on the farm, the more the farm becomes like a factory. Next thing we know corporations will be running farms just the way they run plants in the city. Family-sized farms will be thrown together into big units under specialized management, and the farmers who used to own them will find themselves laborers just like factory hands in the city, with their jobs all laid out for them and no chance to use their own judgment or live their own life."

"Well, I don't think that's coming right away," a young farmer who graduated from college a few years back tries to soothe him. "And I do think there's a lot to what the scientific people say about FINDING MARKETS IN INDUSTRY, if farmers don't want to have to make permanent cuts in their production. Look at the facts. During the first part of this century, we farmers not only had big sales abroad; we had a market at home to which immigration was adding as many as a million people a year. Now foreign markets have dropped off, and experts seem to think the country is on its way to a period of stationary or even falling population. So unless we find some other uses for our products than food and clothing, it looks to me as though we'd have to scale our production down to what a stationary population requires."

"Right you are," approves the laboratory man, "and if farmers had only put the energy into getting a home market among manufacturers that they've spent these last 10 years trying to get back an export market among foreigners, they'd be somewhere today.

"Not that quite a lot of progress hasn't been made, of course. During the last ten years only about two fifths of the American cotton sold in this country has been used for clothing, with another fifth going for household uses. The remaining two fifths have found a market as industrial raw materials, with uses that range from high-speed automobile roadbeds to explosives.

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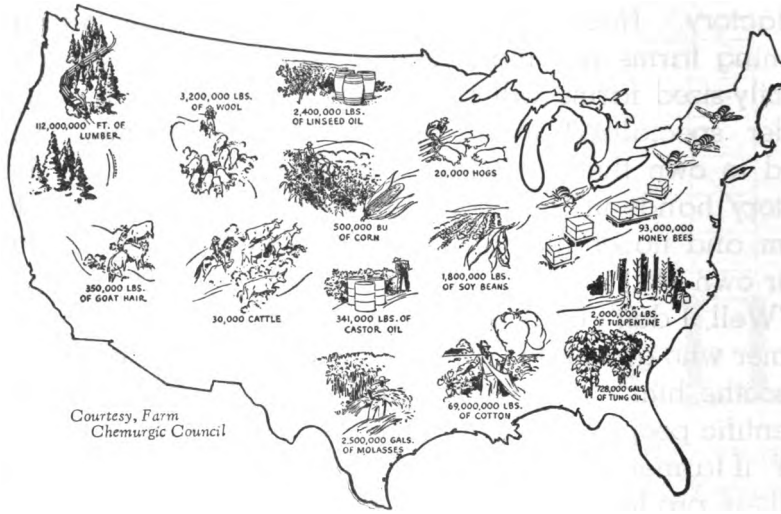
What the American Farm Now Supplies in One Year for One Make of Automobile



"Or you can get at it another way. The farm products that one automobile company in this country buys for its cars include cotton, corn, soy beans, wool, cattle, molasses, linseed oil and turpentine. That's what I mean by the kind of industrial opportunity that farmers seem slow to grasp."

UPS AND DOWNS OF INDUSTRIAL MARKETS

"Well, now, let's back up and look at all this," cautions an older farmer. "Is it such a good thing for farmers to tie up too closely with the domestic market, especially with the industrial part of the domestic market? You say one automobile company used all those farm products in 1935. How many did it use in 1932, I wonder? When the depression came, farmers took a beating on price, all right, but people did keep on buying food and cotton clothing. Lots of factories, on the other hand, shut down tight and cancelled orders. What I want to know is, WHICH WAY IS THE FARMER BETTER OFF, if he sells his products as food and clothing IN A MARKET WHOSE DEMAND IS MORE OR LESS CONSTANT, or if he sells

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his products as raw materials for factories IN A MARKET WHOSE DEMAND IS SOMETIMES LARGER, BUT OFTEN LESS CERTAIN?"

EFFICIENCY AND FARM RETURNS

"I'd like to back up one step farther than you," interjects another farmer, "and look at this farm machinery question again. Our salesman friend here is right that farmers have been willing to put a lot of money into implements these last twenty years, but I'd like to ask, what good did it do them? Looks to me as if when we put a tractor on the place we found ourselves with an agricultural surplus on the place along with it. And in harvest time I've listened too often to tractors being run by moonlight for me to take much stock in the new leisure and all of that sort of thing that machinery was supposed to bring the farmer. We haven't seen much of it out our way, and increased efficiency hasn't brought us increased returns, either."

EFFICIENCY AND FARM COSTS

"Hold on a minute," one of his neighbors puts on the brakes. "Increased efficiency may not have brought us increased returns but it has decreased our unit costs. If you look at where the principal crops are grown in this country, you'll see that production for market has largely shifted to areas where production costs are low. And it's an eye-opener to compare the livestock on our farms today with the livestock we had even so short a while ago as the end of the War. To take just one example, the cows in the herds of a large group of dairy herd improvement associations averaged 247 pounds of butterfat a year in 1920; by 1932 they had stepped up production to 310 pounds. It's the same story all round. Two and four row implements cut down labor costs. Drought resistant wheat, wilt resistant flax, early-maturing cotton, all give better results for the time and materials spent upon them.

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"Now what does that mean in terms of national wealth? It means that THERE'S MORE TO GO ROUND. It means that the consumers of the country can have things that they couldn't have if farmers stuck to the old high cost methods of production. Back when this country became a country, it took all the surplus food produced by 19 farmers to feed 1 city person. In average years in recent times, 19 people on farms have produced enough food for 56 non-farm people, plus 10 living abroad.

"It's only by this sort of division of labor, with farmers feeding city people, and city people making the things farmers want, that national wealth and national income can be increased."

"I think you're right," the young farmer seconds this point of view. "Certainly we don't want to go back to harvesting our wheat with a cradle, do we? WE WANT TO KEEP THE MACHINES, AND IMPROVE THEM. But we'll have to figure things out better than we have so far to be sure that we're going to run the machines instead of the machines running us.

EFFICIENCY AND CONSUMERS' PRICES

"Looks to me as though this is what has happened. Improved methods of farming have cut the farmers' unit costs. Because of competition among farmers the savings due to lower unit costs have been passed on to consumers in the form of lowered prices. The individual farmer has figured that the only way for him to get anything out of the new methods was to increase production. But when everybody increased production, down came prices.

"Now I think it's right for consumers to be the ones to gain from scientific inventions, but that ought to be true all along the line. Because industrialists don't compete with one another the way farmers do, only part of the reduction in unit costs which science has made possible in the industrial world has been passed on to consumers of industrial products. That's where the shoe rubs. FARMERS HAVE PASSED ON THEIR GAINS QUICKLY; INDUSTRIAL-

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ISTS HAVEN'T PASSED THEIRS ON NEARLY SO FAST. Some industries have for years forced consumers to pay prices which are not justified by unit costs, and which are too high to make widespread use of certain products possible."

EFFICIENCY AND EMPLOYMENT

"There's another point about the use of machinery that I think we ought to consider," the voice of the school superintendent is recognized, "and that is THE EFFECT OF MACHINES ON JOBS."

"That's another chapter in the story I was starting to tell a while back," interrupts the laboratory man. "As farmers sell more goods for industrial raw materials, new factories will be built and new jobs open up in urban areas. Farm boys and girls, as they come to working age, can do those jobs just as well as city boys and girls. We all know that the crop of youngsters raised in the country sections is bigger than the farms have room for. Factories manufacturing farm byproducts would give these young people a chance to make a place for themselves."

"In good times, yes," the superintendent continues, "but what about bad times? For a while after 1929 it looked to me as though the farms were the country's unemployment insurance. It used to make me pretty down-hearted to see children who'd gone through our school in the 1920's, and left for the city to make their fortunes, come straggling back home after 1929 as place after place shut down. Some of them have got their jobs back lately, but I wonder if others ever will."

"That's one of the things that's been on my mind," the older farmer seconds the superintendent. "Looks like to me, THE MORE MACHINES, THE FEWER JOBS. People say that the workers whom machines throw out of their jobs will find other jobs in new industries, but there's lots of times when that isn't so easy to do.

"Suppose a successful COTTON PICKER is developed in the next year or so. We're hearing now about machines that will pick as much cotton in a day as a hundred people can. What's going to happen to the tens of thousands of

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farm people who depend on cotton for a living? In recent years most of the people who have lost jobs because of technical improvements have been in the cities, but if the cotton picker comes we're going to be brought FACE TO FACE WITH THE UNEMPLOYMENT PROBLEM RIGHT OUT IN THE COUNTRY DISTRICTS.

"It used to strike me, when I saw the neighbors' sons and daughters and their families coming back home after 1929, and when I saw people who'd never been to the country before, moving into old shacks on rundown soil, that it was lucky we had places where people could get out of the grip of the machine even if there wasn't much to live on after they got there."

"Yes, I guess a lot of people were mighty thankful to tide themselves over out in the country," says the young farmer, "but we can't run our economic system that way for any length of time.

"Commercial farming is a business, and ought to be looked on as a business. We can't throw a good part of the city unemployed back on the farms whenever times are bad in the cities and expect farmers to keep their heads above water.

"And farming on a bare subsistence basis, like the people who've squatted on deserted land up in the hills, means a shrinkage of every one's markets, farm and city alike, and the lowest of living standards for the people who are doing it.

A PROGRAM FOR ECONOMIC SECURITY

"If the country is going to run a machine economy, it will have to cushion the bumps with a SOCIAL SECURITY PROGRAM that doesn't rely on the farms of the country to take care of a lot of the people whom the machines, for one reason or another, are temporarily or permanently unable to employ."

"I agree with you that a system of social insurance is necessary," the older farmer agrees, "and one that takes account of the needs of the farm population, too. But that's

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not enough. All that social insurance can do is to tide over bad times and keep people who are temporarily out of jobs from having their purchasing power cut off and so pulling the market down still further. Benefits under insurance plans are only stop-gap payments, though the fact that the person who gets them is entitled to them makes them a lot less demoralizing than relief.

"But if the ups and downs of business and employment are to be steadied, and if our relief rolls are to be reduced, we've got to LEARN HOW TO USE OUR INCREASED EFFICIENCY to provide the goods that people need and the income they need to buy the goods. There's the real problem."

If you could make some improvements on your farm, what modern equipment would you buy? Would you make your choice in order to lower unit costs? To get increased returns? To lighten your work? To shorten your hours?

If you bought machinery to get increased returns, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOUR NEIGHBORS DID LIKEWISE?

Is it a good thing for farmers to become as dependent on the things city people make as city people are on the things farmers grow?

What do you know about the social security program now in operation? What action under its provision is being taken in your county? In what respects are farmers likely to benefit by it? Under what provisions are they excluded?

What practical steps do you think could be taken TO LESSEN THE HARDSHIPS CAUSED BY THE USE OF MACHINES? TO MAKE THEIR BENEFITS MORE GENERAL?

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MORE ABOUT MACHINES AND THE FARMER

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

THE MACHINE AND THE FARMER. Educational Research Project 15, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1935. $0.15.

LET'S GO PARTNERS. Karl T. Compton. The Chemical Foundation, 654 Madison Ave., New York City. 1936. Free.

CHEMISTRY WRECKS THE FARM. W. W. Parrish and H. F. Clark. Harpers' Magazine, New York City. August 1935. $0.40.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SECOND DEARBORN CONFERENCE OF AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND SCIENCE, Farm Chemurgic Council, Dearborn, Mich. 1936. $0.50.

THE AMERICAN FARMER—CITIZEN OR SERF? Educational Research Project 15, 5835 Kimbark Ave., Chicago, Ill. 1935. $0.15.

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY. Henry A. Wallace. U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS. Chapter on Technology and Agriculture. National Resources Committee, Washington, D. C. Forthcoming.

MEN AND MACHINES. Building America, 425 West 123rd Street, New York City. 1935. $0.30.

THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF THOUGHT IN OUR NATIONAL PROBLEMS. Francis P. Garvan. The Chemical Foundation, 654 Madison Ave., New York City. 1936. Free.

YOU AND MACHINES. W. F. Ogburn. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1934. $0.25.

WASTE AND THE MACHINE AGE. Stuart Chase. League for Industrial Democracy, 112 E. 19th St., New York City. 1931. $0.15.

WILL THE MACHINE DOMINATE MAN? American Book Co., 88 Lexington Ave., New York City. 1936. $0.10.

TWO MEN AND THEIR MACHINE. (Cotton Picker) Victor Weybright. The Survey Graphic, New York City. August 1936. $0.30.

THE TVA AND ECONOMIC SECURITY IN THE SOUTH. T. L. Howard. University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N. C. 1936. $0.15.

JOBS OR THE DOLE? N. B. DeNood. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill. 1935. $0.25.

SOCIAL SECURITY—WHAT AND WHY? Social Security Board, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

SOCIAL SECURITY IN THE U. S.—1936. American Association for Social Security, Inc., 22 E. 17th St., New York City. 1936. $0.10.

THE PROVIDENTIAL STATE. Walter Lippmann. The Atlantic Monthly, Boston, Mass. October 1936. $0.40.

LABOR IN SEARCH OF SECURITY. No. 5, More Security for Old People. No. 6, Security, Welfare and Sickness. No. 7, What Is Social Security. Research Division, Workers Education Bureau, 815 Mt. Vernon Place, N.W., Washington, D. C. 1936. $0.05 each.

AN APPRAISAL OF THE FEDERAL SOCIAL SECURITY ACT. W. W. Aldrich. Institute of Public Affairs, Charlottesville, Va. 1936. $0.15.

WHY SOCIAL SECURITY? Social Security Board, Washington, D. C. Forthcoming.

SECURITY OR THE DOLE? Public Affairs Committee, National Press Building, Washington, D. C. 1936. $0.10.

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND SOCIAL SECURITY (Charts). Social Security Board, Washington, D. C. 1936. Free.

PRODUCTION, EMPLOYMENT AND PAYROLLS IN 1935. Labor Information Bulletin, March 1936. U. S. Department of Labor, Washington, D. C. Free.

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1936

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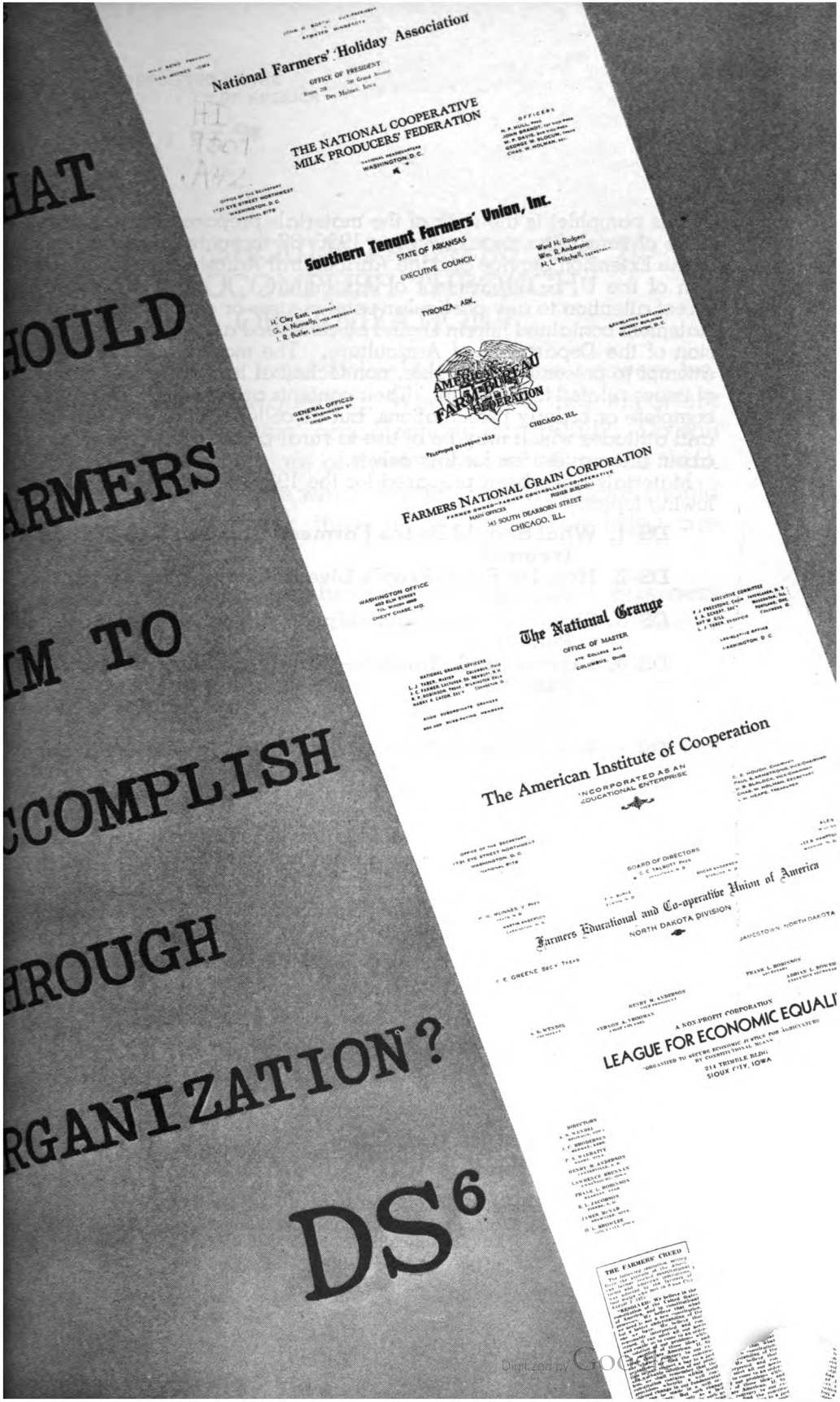

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This pamphlet is the sixth of the materials prepared for the assistance of rural discussion groups in 1936–37 through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view or conclusion, and no statement contained herein should be construed as an official expression of the Department of Agriculture. The materials listed below attempt to present, in readable, non-technical language, discussions of issues related to rural life. Their contents are not offered as either complete or orderly presentations, but as collections of current facts and attitudes which may be of use to rural people who are thinking about these questions for themselves.

Materials have been prepared for the 1936–37 season on the following topics:

DS–1. What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
DS–2. How Do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?
DS–3. Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?
DS–4. Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
DS–5. Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
DS–6. What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
DS–7. What Kind of Agricultural Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
DS–8. What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?

Two pamphlets on technique, intended primarily for the assistance of leaders of rural discussion groups and forums, are also available:

D–1. A Brief Guide to Methods. (revised 1936.)
D–2. How to Organize and Conduct County Forums (revised 1936).

United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photographs by Works Progress Administration, American Red Cross,
Rural Electrification Administration)
December 1936

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WHAT SHOULD FARMERS AIM TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH ORGANIZATION?

The statements listed below set out some answers frequently given to the question: What are the most important purposes that farmers' organizations can fulfill? Do you agree with one or more of these answers? Can you think of other goals towards which farmers' organizations should move? Do you think that any of the goals listed are objectionable? Why?

1. **To give farmers the same powers that business men in cities get by organizing corporations or associations.**
2. **To do for farm laborers what trade unions do for city workers.**
3. **To reduce the costs of marketing commodities farmers sell and cut out middlemen's profits.**
4. **To help farmers save money by purchasing cooperatively the commodities they buy.**
5. **To enable farmers to share the risk of loss through crop failure, fire, accident, or other hazards.**
6. **To provide capital for cooperatively owned elevators, power plants, and the like.**
7. **To arrange for improved medical and hospital service in rural areas.**
8. **To fill the need of farmers for credit at low interest rates.**
9. **To represent farmers in the development of national policies affecting agriculture.**
10. **To enrich the life of farm communities through forums, discussion groups, plays, picnics, and general good times.**

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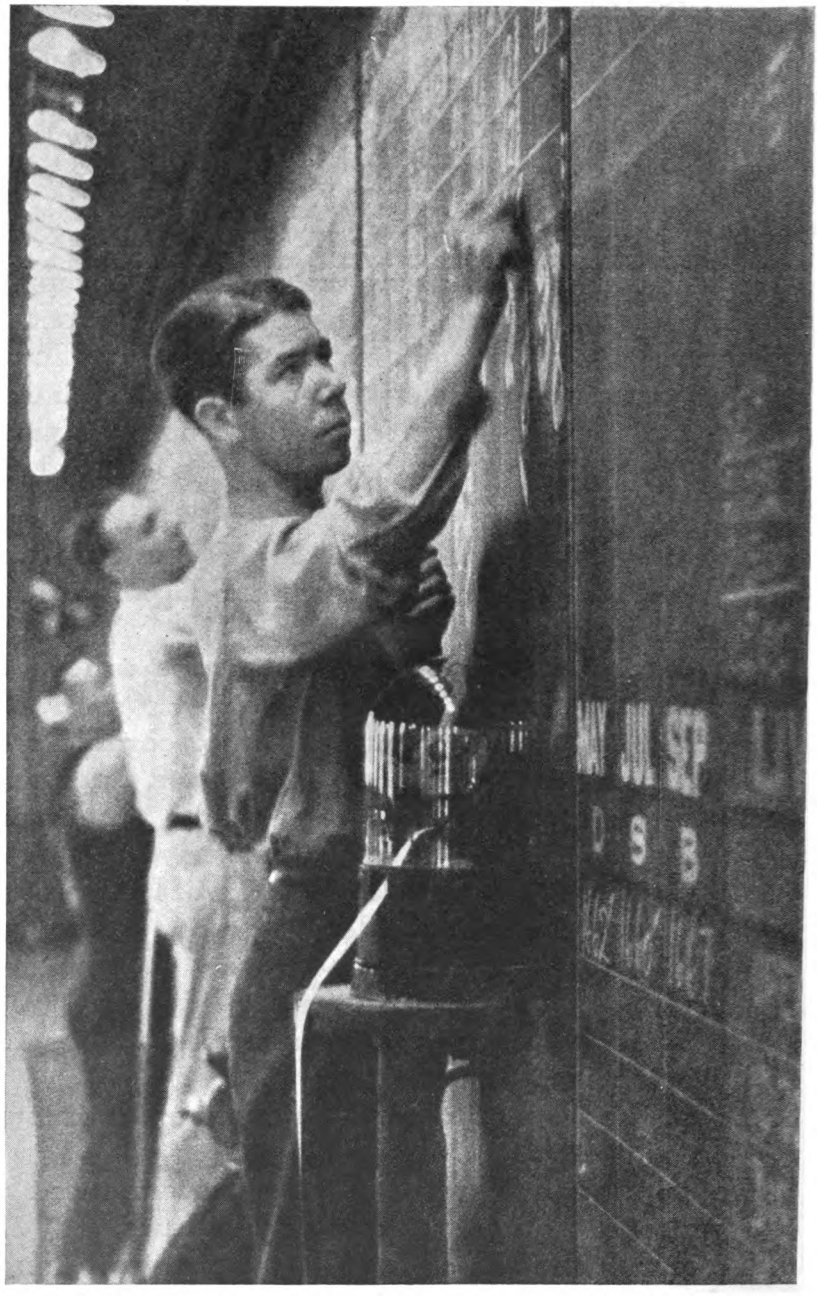

Should Farm Groups Try to Affect Prices?

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WHAT SHOULD FARMERS AIM TO ACCOMPLISH THROUGH ORGANIZATION?

"Farmers ought to organize to sell their products," the manager of a selling co-op starts the discussion briskly. "Why should the people who raise our farm products pay toll every year to a group of distributors for doing what the farmers, if they organize, can perfectly well do for themselves?"

"There's certainly no reason for paying fancy charges for getting our goods to the consumer," a farmer of the locality agrees, "and I'm the first to recognize what a good job your co-op has done through the depression. But how much can farmers expect to gain through cooperative distribution?

CO-OPS REDUCE SELLING COSTS

"Part of the commission paid the middleman is his profit, and a co-op can save its members the middleman's profit. But another part isn't profit. The middleman has a job to do, all right. Now if he isn't doing his job efficiently, if a co-op can come along and do it better than he, then farmers who join the co-op will have a further clear saving as compared with farmers who deal through the distributor. There's always a possibility that the co-op may come at its problem fresher than a firm that's been in business a long time. For some products, it may be able to work out a farm-to-market system of distribution by truck, or some other NEW MEANS OF SAVING HANDLING CHARGES. Now those are real savings. But it looks to me as though that's about as far as a selling co-op can hope to go."

"Is it now," says the champion of the cause of cooperative selling. "One of the best things that selling co-ops do is to regulate the flow of members' products to market,

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so that supply is distributed more evenly over the whole year and the market isn't glutted and farm prices depressed when the crops move from the fields. You know as well as I do that co-ops make a lot of money that way for their members."

OUTSIDERS BREAK MARKETS

"Also for their non-members," rejoins the previous speaker. "The outsider is the man who gets the real benefit when co-ops try to steady the market. The co-ops have all the work of holding the goods while he sells just when he wants to, at prices held up by the co-ops' efforts."

"Providing the prices do hold up," another voice is added to the discussion. "If we look at the history of co-ops in this country, and look at what outsiders have done to them, it's a pretty discouraging story. Unless a co-op happens to be dealing with a very special product, or a clearly limited area of distribution, I don't see what's to KEEP THE OUTSIDER FROM BREAKING THE MARKET every time. There are, of course, a few co-ops that are situated so they can play the same kind of withholding game that any big distributor plays. But they're mighty few and far between."

"What you're really saying," chimes in a man who has been nodding approval, "is that unless a co-op controls the volume of products coming onto the market, it can't accomplish much. Especially over a period of years. Every price that a co-op holds firm is just an invitation to outsiders to step up their production and take advantage of it.

CORPORATE ORGANIZATION

"There's where farmers are at a big disadvantage compared with business men in the cities. The big corporations can keep outsiders from breaking their markets because production of manufactured goods is centered in a few places which they control instead of being spread all over the country the way farm production is.

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"I say that what farmers ought to try to get through organization is THE SAME KIND OF POWER THAT CITY BUSINESS MEN GET THROUGH TRADE ASSOCIATIONS or corporate holdings."

GOVERNMENT FARM PROGRAMS

"That's why I say that when farmers want to accomplish anything very important from the selling end, they have to call on the forces of government," interjects a farmer who has been active in AAA work. "Government farm programs, with benefit payments attached, can give farmers the equivalent of corporate organization, and they're the only things that can. A farmer who knows he's going to get a cash return for coming in on a program isn't tempted to be an outsider as the man is who knows he can make money while the co-op holds an umbrella over him."

"Will even Government programs hold people in line in the long run?" inquires the first farmer to speak. "Leastways as long as participation in them is voluntary? Not all of the programs of the past few years have been without trouble from outsiders. And what about the long-run effect of these programs? If people build up their land to a point where they can cash in on stored-up fertility at mighty low cost, won't they be tempted, some years from now, to produce at a rate that will put prices through the wringer?"

EVEN EXCHANGE

"I grant you that we've got to watch mighty carefully how farm programs work," replies the advocate of such measures, "but unless farmers can get together I don't see how they can bargain with other groups in the Nation. UNLESS FARMERS CAN GET MORE BARGAINING POWER than they have when acting alone or in little associations that compete with each other, the goods they produce are not going to sell at prices that will make it possible for them to buy their rightful share of the goods produced by other groups in the Nation."

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CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS

"And unless they get that share," a woman member of the group speaks up, "how can farm communities supply themselves with the things which they must get if people are to want to go on living in the country? How can farmers who aren't making a decent living support their churches properly? HOW CAN RURAL COMMUNITIES FIND ENOUGH TAXES to keep up their roads and have the kind of schools they want their children to go to?

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

"I think there are lots of things organization can do for farmers besides work on the problem of farm income. I belong to our church guild, and the parent-teachers, and when the schools were consolidated and we had all those empty school houses standing around I was keen on signing up members in the community association so we could use the school houses for get-togethers. I think lots can be done to build up community spirit that way. But in the end you have to come back to the question, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO THESE THINGS ON? How are farm folks to get a fair share of the national income?"

PRESSURE GROUPS

"Well, I can tell you one thing right now," a man across the circle from her breaks in decisively, "farm folks are going to get a fair share in the national income only in proportion as farm organizations step out and make farm interests known to the rest of the Nation. If the other groups in the Nation know that the FARMERS KNOW WHAT THEY WANT AND ARE OUT TO GET IT, believe me, things will be different from what they have been."

"That would mean farmers going into politics as farmers," objects a new voice. "I myself wouldn't like to see that. If farmers go into politics as farmers and business men go in as business men and workers go in as workers, think what a mess we'll have. To my mind, economics

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and politics don't mix. Politics concerns citizens, whether they're farmers or merchants or anything else. I don't want to see the butcher, the baker, and the candlestick maker all getting off by themselves when it comes to voting."

"Well that's where they are right now, all except the farmer," rebuts the previous speaker. "I don't look at it the same way you do. I want to see farmers organize to put themselves on an equal footing with business men in the cities. The business men are organized, believe me."

"WHAT ABOUT FARM LABORERS ORGANIZING to better their conditions the way city workers organize in trade unions?" inquires a farmer's son who has a job in a nearby city.

CO-OPS REDUCE BUYING COSTS

"Why not go at this thing from another angle," an advocate of consumers' cooperation makes himself heard. "We all agree that one of the farmer's biggest burdens in recent years has been the difference between the level of the prices of the things he sells and that of the prices of the things he has to buy. Let's leave the question of what he can do about prices of the things he sells for a minute, and look at what can be done about prices of the things he buys. Isn't cooperative purchasing the way out of that difficulty?"

"You're quite right," a housewife speaks up. "When you think of all the cash that every farmer's wife in this community pays out every year just for handling the yard goods and the hardware and the food that she buys, it's easy enough to see where quite a saving could be made. And when you add all the fertilizer and spray materials and binder twine and feed that the men buy to use on our farms, you begin to run into real money."

"Well, I'd like to ask you the same question that I asked our friend here from the selling co-op," repeats the man who was second to join the evening's discussion. "I'm not running down any savings that a purchasing co-op can

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succeed in making. But oughtn't we to keep in mind that the savings such a co-op can make are no greater than the difference between its efficiency and the efficiency of ordinary distributors? That may be something well worth while, but I wonder if it would be enough to make much of a change in the price disadvantage of farm goods in relation to city goods. After all, the prices of the city goods that distributors offer to farm buyers aren't set by the distributors who handle them but by the manufacturers who make them."

"Why should cooperation stop with the retail stores where we buy our goods?" questions another housewife. "If we can save a little through a well-managed cooperative retail organization, why can't we save a little more through a cooperative wholesale organization to serve the retail co-ops? Every farmer's wife knows how far a few pennies saved can be made to go, and if we could save ourselves both retailers' and wholesalers' commissions I think we'd have done something to be proud of."

CITY CONSUMERS' CO-OPS

"What will happen, though," a third housewife brings up a different point, "if city consumers start cooperative buying at the same time that farmers start cooperative selling? Won't there be A DIRECT CONFLICT OF INTEREST BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS?"

"That depends on what we think co-ops are for," replies the previous speaker. "If co-ops are to cut out unnecessary handling and give consumers, whether on farms or in cities, the benefit of large-scale distribution, I see no reason why cooperative organization all along the line isn't a good thing rather than a bad one. In fact, if we got that, everyone could have the guarantees of quality which to my mind are one of the biggest advantages co-ops can offer. It's only when one group wants to beat down the producers' prices received by the other that there's likely to be trouble."

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"The prices that cooperative groups ought to work on are not each others' prices but monopoly prices," says the head of a local farm organization. "If a cooperative wholesale society was built up like other wholesalers, it would probably have some factories of its own. And it could count on the cooperative retail stores for outlets for the goods from those factories. Now I don't see why a firm that was fixed like that couldn't distribute industrial goods to farmers at a rate to GIVE OTHER MANUFACTURERS A REAL RUN FOR THEIR MONEY."

"That's the way the cooperative movements have done it in foreign countries, all right," interjects a writer for a farm journal. "In England and Denmark the cooperative wholesale societies operate factories making shoes, furniture, tobacco goods, candy, china, margarine, soap, motors, chemicals, wine, and all sorts of other things."

"And I'll bet the manufacturers of those products made it mighty hot for the co-ops when they came into the market," comments a member of the group.

"You said it," the newspaperman replies, "but if you want a real story of co-ops as trust-busters you want to get a line on what happened in Sweden."

"Well, Sweden isn't the only place where new ventures in cooperation are going on," says a farmer's daughter who is a public health nurse in a nearby county.

GROUP HEALTH PLANS

"People in the county where I work are buying health on a group basis. We have a County Health Association, which anyone in the county may join. The membership fee is $18, payable in monthly or quarterly instalments. That payment entitles the member and his family to the medical care usually given by a general practitioner, an annual physical examination, preventive service for common diseases like diphtheria, scarlet fever or typhoid, and medicine up to $10 worth. Just about everything except operations and baby cases is included in the

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membership fee, and members can take their choice among any of the doctors agreeing to furnish medical service to the Association. We have about 200 members, and that means nearly a thousand persons who know that they won't have to pay unexpected bills for ordinary illness and who KNOW THAT THEY WILL GET CARED FOR IF SICKNESS COMES."

Do you Favor Group Payments for Health Services?



"Plans similar to that are in operation in quite a few places in this country for supplying medical service to people on relief," supplements the county welfare worker, "with the county doing the financing. And I understand that in a good many rural areas in the wheat sections of Canada, the farmers have included medical care among the services with which they supply themselves through local taxation."

FARM CREDIT UNIONS

"The risk of sickness isn't the only risk against which farmers insure themselves, and medical care isn't the only service with which they are supplying themselves on a group basis," the chairman of a local credit union con-

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tinues the list. "Crop insurance has come in mighty handy in lots of places these last seasons, and fire and accident risks are always with us. But the story of cooperation that interests me most is THE STORY OF COOPERATIVE CREDIT."

RURAL POWER ASSOCIATIONS

"One of the things I'd like to see cooperative capital used for in this neighborhood," a farmer from a back road speaks up, "is a cooperative power association. I figure that farmers are going to get electricity on their farms a lot faster if they go after it themselves, and go in groups, not one by one. Some groups of farmers are doing it, and I'd like to see us be one."

"Well, I'm not saying that projects like that aren't fine," the manager of the selling co-op who opened the meeting is heard again, "but if farmers are going in for a cooperative movement in this county, I'd like to see them BEGIN WITH GOODS RATHER THAN SERVICES.

"If you look at foreign nations like Denmark where the cooperative movement began with the farmers rather than with the city workers, you'll see that the marketing co-ops are the big ones."

"Hold on a bit!" the representative of the purchasing co-op has no intention of letting him get away with that statement. "In this country cooperative purchasing by farmers accounts for about three quarters of all the consumers' cooperative buying in the country. Our business for 1935 ran above a quarter of a billion dollars."

"Right you are," is the good-natured rejoinder, "but after all our dairy marketing co-ops beat that figure and our grain marketing associations hit just about the same mark last year."

"Do you know what I think of this discussion," blurts out a man who has sat through the evening in disgruntled silence. "I think you've been TALKING LIKE A BUNCH OF FOOLS. How is a busy farmer going to have time to know what is really going on in the co-op of which he is a member? And if he doesn't keep up with what is

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How Can Rural Electrification Be Speeded Up?

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going on, isn't the manager going to play him for a sucker and feather his own nest at the same time? Then when the farmers come to, they'll find that the only difference between their co-op and any other distributor is that the co-op makes a pretense of wearing overalls.

"And even if farmers could find honest and efficient managers—and to my mind that's a big IF—how long do you think the private retailers and the big private wholesalers of the country would let a cooperative movement last if the movement really had teeth in it? I tell you those boys are organized for business, and if they see some competition coming their way—well, they're organized to handle that, too."

Do you think there is something to be said for the last speaker's point of view? How much?

What is being done along lines discussed above by farm organizations of which you are a member?

Would you like to see an EXPANSION OF THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT in this country? If so, what would you propose as a first step?

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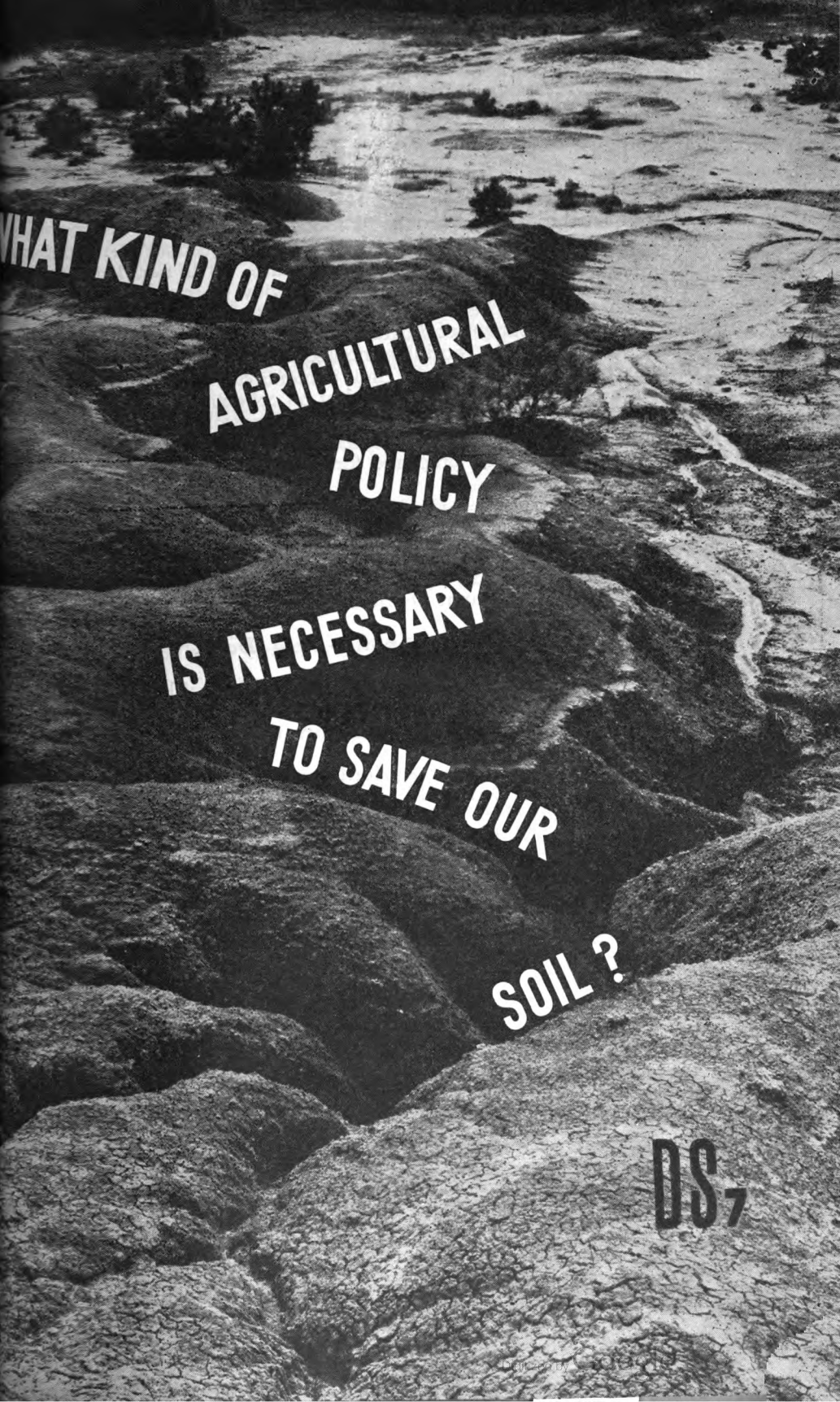
WHAT KIND OF
AGRICULTURAL
POLICY
IS NECESSARY
TO SAVE OUR
SOIL ?
DS7

This pamphlet is the seventh of the materials prepared for the assistance of rural discussion groups in 1936–37 through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view or conclusion, and no statement contained herein should be construed as an official expression of the Department of Agriculture. The materials listed below attempt to present, in readable, nontechnical language, discussions of issues related to rural life. Their contents are not offered as either complete or orderly presentations, but as collections of current facts and attitudes which may be of use to rural people who are thinking about these questions for themselves.

Materials have been prepared for the 1936–37 season on the following topics:

DS–1. What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
DS–2. How Do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?
DS–3. Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?
DS–4. Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
DS–5. Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
DS–6. What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
DS–7. What Kind of Agricultural Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
DS–8. What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?

Two pamphlets on technique, intended primarily for the assistance of leaders of rural discussion groups and forums, are also available:

D–1. A Brief Guide to Methods (revised 1936).
D–2. How to Organize and Conduct County Forums (revised 1936).

United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Illustrations by Works Progress Administration, Soil Conservation Service, and Resettlement Administration)
December 1936

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WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY IS NECESSARY TO SAVE OUR SOIL?

Americans are waking up to the fact that soil conservation is one of the most important jobs ahead. What have you to say on the following questions:

1. **Are losses through soil erosion and soil depletion serious enough to require a continuous national policy?**
2. **Can we work out of our difficulties by using individual judgment on individual farms?**
3. **What has been the history of our forests under private initiative?**
4. **Should we have agricultural policies put into effect in times of drought—like 1934 and 1936—and in times of price depression—like 1932—but not in normal times?**
5. **Is local policy, or state policy, adequate to deal with droughts and depressions? With production in normal years?**
6. **Why haven't more farmers in the past been careful with their soil? Would most farmers be willing to take care of their soil if they could afford it?**
7. **What can be done to save our soil? How can farmers afford to do it?**
8. **Who suffers eventually when we waste our national resources? Why should the Government be interested in conservation?**
9. **If you were working out an agricultural policy for the nation, would you stress a long-time point of view? What would you include? Why?**

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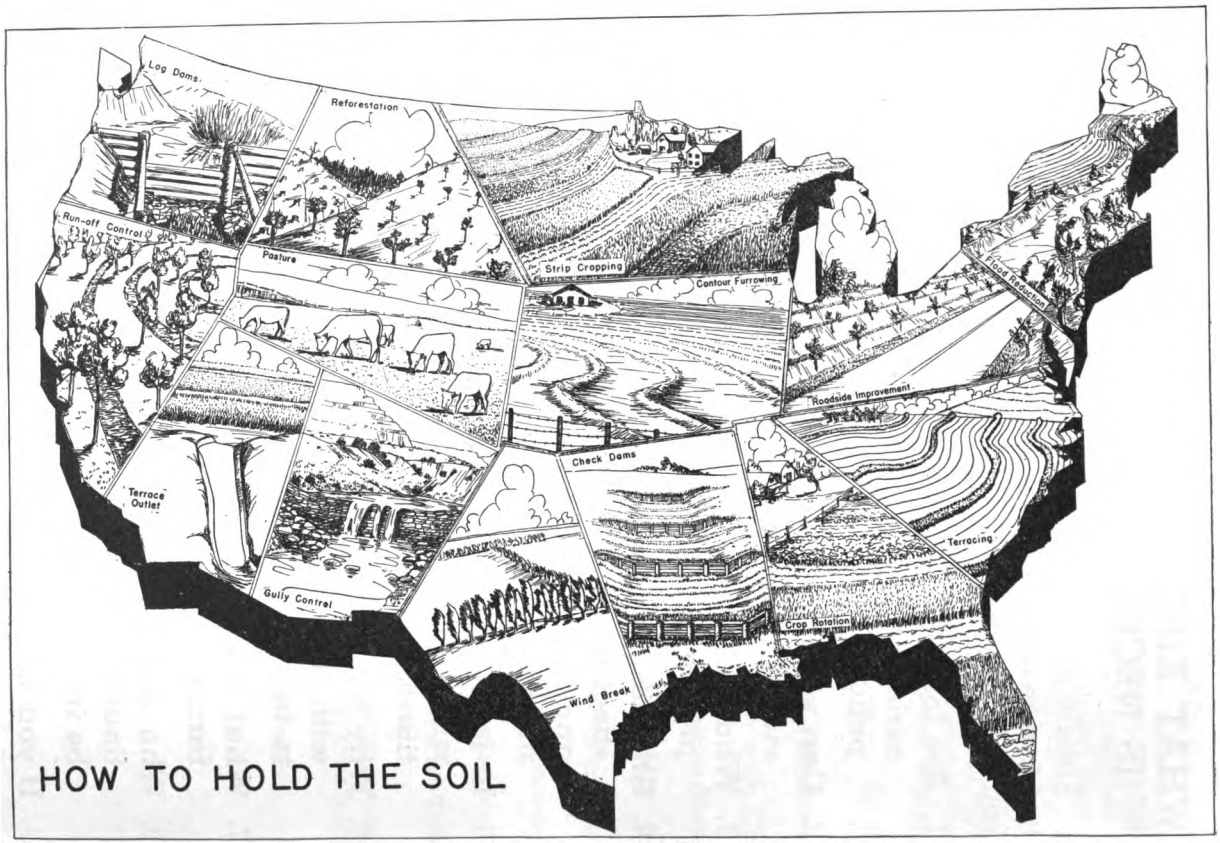

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WHAT KIND OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY IS NECESSARY TO SAVE OUR SOIL?

"I can't see why there's been so much hollering lately about saving the soil," remarks a successful farmer when a group gets together for a little plain talk. "I never had any trouble holding my soil. The weather blows, rains, snows just like it always did."

"Well, you'd see why there's been so much hollering, if your farm was washing and gullying like mine, and plenty other farms I know," another farmer comes back at him. "Lots of us feel it's time to do some real hard thinking on what looks like a mighty serious proposition: SHOULD WE PAY MORE ATTENTION TO SAVING THE SOIL? and HOW IS IT TO BE DONE?"

HOW HAVE WE LOOKED AT LAND IN THE PAST?

"It's just another one of those new-fangled notions, going at it the way they do," inserts one of the oldest men. "The Government never bothered to talk about soil conservation when they were so busy giving the land away to get it settled."

"That's true enough. The idea then was to settle the frontier quick as possible," says another old-timer. "I can remember how all the towns were growing and people kept pushing farther and farther out. Why, LAND VALUES SHOT UP FAST AS WEEDS. People bought land and held it just to sell. Everybody wanted to get rich quick!

"There was plenty of untouched land then. If a man didn't have a good farm, he just moved on to another one."

"There was plenty of timber, too," adds a young farmer who went to a C. C. C. camp. "But they cut out the forests

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about as clean as a whistle. Look at some of the stumps they left for us today."

"Quick profits did it, like I said," the old farmer went on. "Right on down through and after the War, that was about all folks were interested in. PEOPLE DID AS THEY PLEASED WITH OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, and there wasn't anybody to lift a staying hand, or point out that maybe some day the country as a whole was bound to suffer for their greedy waste."

IS IT TIME TO CHANGE OUR MINDS ON LAND POLICY?

"Well, we're getting along all right," says another farmer. "I don't see that things are suffering like you say. There's plenty of good land left."

"But how long will it be good?" asks a farmer everybody knows as being especially careful in the way he treats his soil. "It's perfectly plain how the different kinds of erosion work: even if gullies don't wash out, sheet erosion goes on every time it rains—and when there's drought the wind comes along and lifts dust storms so bad sometimes they seem like fog."

"It looks to me like WE'VE GOT TO WAKE UP TO THE NEED FOR CHANGE," the young farmer asserts. "Why should we go on looking at American land as something to be used up as quick as possible when we can see how destructive that point of view has already been?

"Why, do you realize that right here in the U. S. A. at least 50 MILLION ACRES OF ONCE GOOD LAND HAVE BEEN COMPLETELY RUINED for producing crops? But it doesn't stop there: another 50 million are almost as bad; 100 MILLION ACRES NOW IN CULTIVATION HAVE LOST A LARGE PART OF THE ORIGINAL PRODUCING SOIL through the quiet undercover work of sheet erosion —and another 100 million acres are well on their way to the same condition.

"And when you stop to think that it takes nature anywhere from 3 to 6 hundred years to build back a single inch of top-soil, it makes you see we've been spending our

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most valuable natural resource like a lot of drunken sailors!"

"It appears to me farmers ought to get down to business and WORK OUT A LONG-TIME CONSERVATION PROGRAM if they're interested in what's happening to the basis of their living," a thoughtful individual contributes. "They ought to be willing enough. It's to their benefit."

WHO'S TO BLAME FOR LETTING THE SOIL ERODE?

"But is it to their benefit?" asks one of the older men. "I think you're taking it too much for granted that farmers see ahead far enough to be sure of what's working for their good. Who's to blame for present soil erosion, if not the farmer? The city folks who buy the farmer's products didn't have anything to do with it, did they?"

"Well, a farmer's immediate interests and his long-time interests don't always jibe," some one else puts in. "Just like THE FARMER'S IMMEDIATE INTERESTS AND THE NATION'S INTERESTS DON'T ALWAYS GO HAND-IN-HAND.

"Look at the reasons why soil erosion is serious as it is. Of course some farmers just don't know how to take the right kind of care of the soil. But most of 'em are smart enough—they know what OUGHT TO BE DONE all right, even if they don't do it. That's where private and national interests clash.

"Look at the farmers who plowed up LAND THAT NEVER SHOULD HAVE BEEN PLOWED. Plenty of 'em knew it at the time, but prices were good so they went right ahead. Slogans like 'Food Will Win the War' have more to do with our dust storms than appears at first thought. Well, they made their money then—but where are they today? They want help and they need help from the Federal Government to get them out of their scrape. If Uncle Sam doesn't come to the rescue, nobody else will.

"Then lots of FARMS ARE BOUGHT BECAUSE SOMEBODY HOPES TO TURN THEM AT A QUICK PROFIT.

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It's just pure and simple speculation. It certainly isn't to these people's immediate interest to take any care of the soil. All they want is to get as much out as they can while they're holding on, then let go and do the whole thing over again with another piece of property. That's where the Nation suffers in the face of private profit.

"And take tenancy. WHY SHOULD A TENANT BOTHER TO IMPROVE THE SOIL when he never gets paid for his improvements, and when like as not he's planning to move on to another farm next season? The landlord wants as much as he can get, and the tenant wants the same thing—so when they get through, the soil has been mined of its fertility for cash crop profits. Again it's a question of immediate interests.

"THE BIG MOVEMENT BACK TO THE FARM during the depression hasn't helped the soil any, either. It's put extra pressure on submarginal areas, and means that more folks are trying to make a living out of the land—when there were already too many in the first place. That makes things harder for them all.

"A special reason many farmers seem careless of their soil is because they have such HEAVY DEBT BURDENS. They bought land at high prices and are paying high interest rates. If they can't make enough money to keep in the clear each year, they're just out of luck! That means CUTTHROAT COMPETITION INSTEAD OF CO-OPERATION. They try to raise a larger proportion of the whole crop than their neighbors, even though surpluses have already driven down prices to the breaking point. Of course, when they go in for growing all they can, soil conservation practices get thrown to the winds. THE FARMER'S INCOME IS OUT OF BALANCE in comparison with city income.

"The upshot of the whole thing is that MANY FARMERS REALLY CAN'T AFFORD TO SAVE THE SOIL. And the tragedy is that NEITHER THE FARMERS NOR THE NATION CAN AFFORD NOT TO SAVE THE SOIL!

"It's plain enough that FARMERS ARE CAUGHT BY THE PRESSURE OF AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM that has

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driven them pretty close to ruin. Except where farmers are plain lazy or ignorant, the fact that our soil is eroding isn't any more the farmer's fault individually than it is city folks' fault individually. Both HAVE TO OPERATE AGAINST THE COMMON GOOD—against the Nation's good—if they're to keep heads above water in the competitive economic race."

"Well, it doesn't look any too cheerful for the future," inserts the young farmer emphatically. "We've all got children coming along, and I hate to think of the struggle they'll face. But it seems to me that with farmers working together and Government cooperating, there ought to be a number of ways out."

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO PRESERVE OUR GOOD LAND?

"If we can't depend on individual initiative, then it's just too bad!" remarks a wealthy farmer. "The Government only gets in the way. If a man won't take care of his property himself, there's no reason why somebody else should take care of it for him.

"Besides, I think that if everybody's private interests are served, then the public interest is served to best advantage."

"If farmers can't afford to save the soil, isn't it to the Nation's benefit to save it?" retorts the young farmer. "When farmers get economic help, it's certainly to public advantage."

"FARMERS NEED EDUCATION a lot more than they need the Government monkeying with their incomes," breaks in a third speaker. "Look at the soil conservation demonstrations that are being put on all over the country, and the way the farmer soil conservation committees are cooperating. Don't you think it helps to show farmers the most modern and scientific ways of saving the soil?"

"What if farmers hold back production and build fertility for a long time—and then let loose and plant a normal crop on the improved soil? Won't they get a yield big enough to knock prices clear to thunder—worse than 1932?" inserts another voice.

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MORE ABOUT FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS

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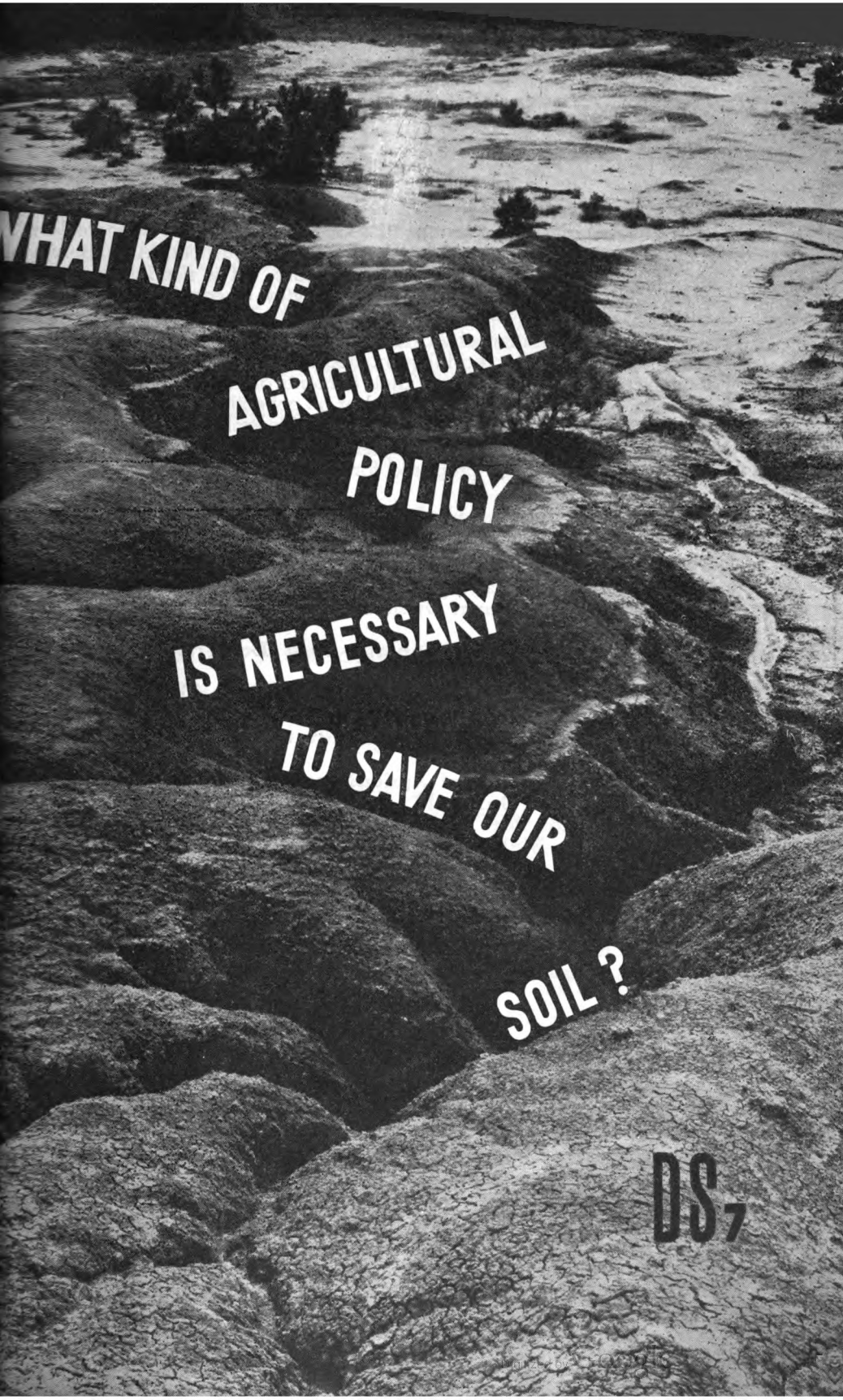
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"There are certainly plenty of things about the soil that are important to know—for example, just how we're running through our supply of phosphorus. That's one of the most important elements for a growing plant, and one of the hardest to replace when it's gone," the young man continues.

"It's hard to believe that TONS AND TONS OF SOIL WASH AWAY EVERY TIME IT RAINS. But it's true, and the experiments show just exactly how much water runs off every kind of slope planted to different kinds of crops, and what the best ways are to check it."

"Sure," another farmer agrees, "take a look at any creek or river after a rain, and watch the silt boil. Sometimes I see it and think how only a little while before that earth belonged to me—and now it's rushing away to build up a mud flat or fill up a dam."

"The big dams don't fill up if check dams are built on the little waters," says the young farmer who went to the C. C. C. camp. "Like replanting forests, dams help to keep down floods."

"Seems to me as though the place to start is on individual farms," inserts another farmer. "I never did like to see the way some folks overgraze their land or plow hillsides they know good and well ought to stay in brush."

"There's terracing and contour furrowing to help hold the soil," adds one of the older farmers. "But the trouble is too many of us lock the barn door after there's not hair nor hide left of the mare. Plenty of farmers could be strip-cropping—and then they'd have some moisture in the sod when a dry season comes. And it's not so hard to keep fertility if a man'll plant winter and summer cover crops to build up humus and stop so much leaching. With hillsides in grass, crop rotation, and legumes, lots of farmers wouldn't be complaining about the way their yield drops year after year."

"Studying how much and where to shift your crops is one way county planning helps," adds the young farmer.

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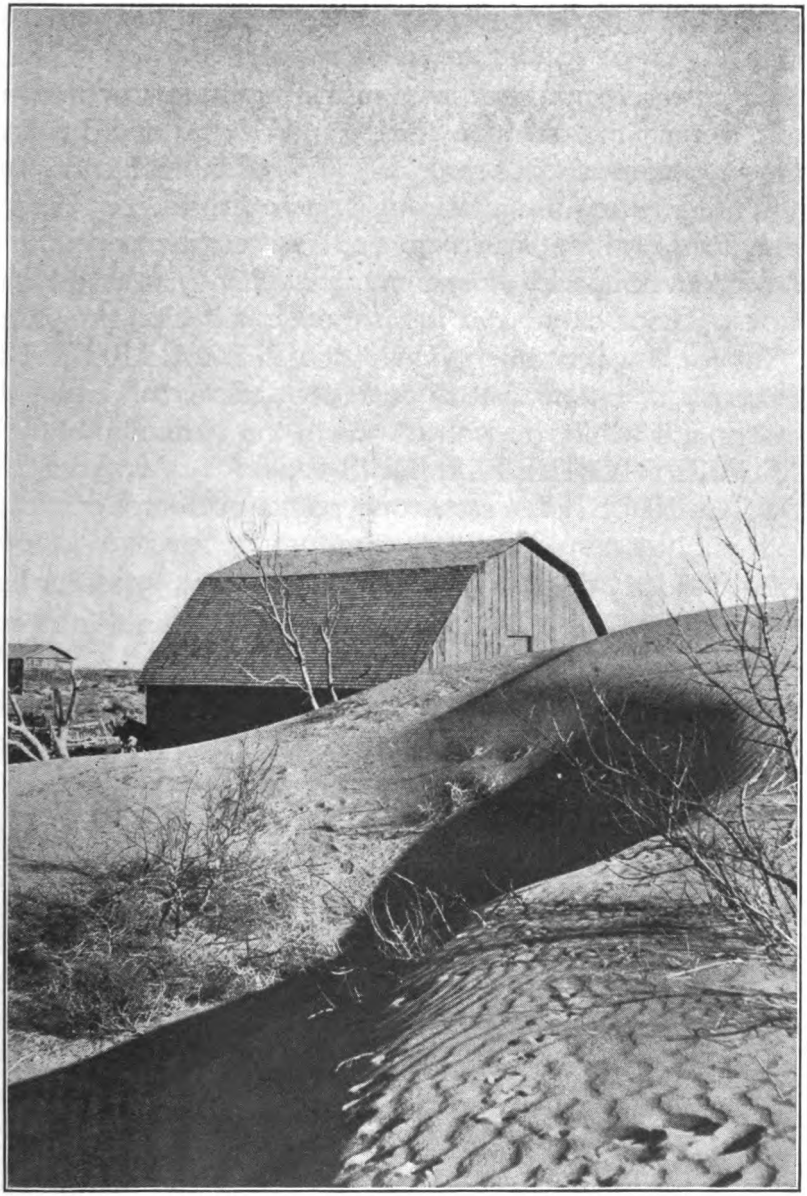

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"But what I want to know is HOW CAN FARMERS AFFORD TO TREAT THE SOIL THE WAY THEY KNOW THEY OUGHT TO? Even if all farmers were farm owners and the big tenancy problem solved, things still wouldn't be rosy as far as saving the soil is concerned."

"What really matters is a man's attitude toward his land," one of the old men remarks. "If you could fatten up many farmers' pocketbooks you wouldn't have a very tough time getting them to treat their soil right. But there are a lot of others who'd go on treating their land like speculators no matter how much money they were getting out of it. Look at what a lot of them did during the War.

"Yet for the present, it looks like SPECIAL BENEFITS are going to be necessary to make conservation worth the farmer's while, as well as worth the Nation's while."

"SUBSIDY TO THE FARMER IS JUST AS BAD AS SUBSIDY TO INDUSTRY," some one points out emphatically. "Both ought to stand on their own feet."

"But industry doesn't stand on its own feet," asserts the old farmer. "Look at all the help the manufacturers have had from the Government in years past."

"Could prices the farmer pays and prices the farmer gets be settled in something like a fair ratio so that folks would know what to count on from year to year?" asks the young man.

"Well, look what's happened to farmers in the past. The industrial market is controlled by the manufacturers—they don't produce any more than they figure they can sell. That keeps prices up, and you have to pay what they ask if you want something they make. But what have farmers always done? Have they adjusted their production to what they know they can sell? And what happened to prices when they didn't? Every man produced all he possibly could, regardless of what the market would take—and when the whole surplus production was all rolled up together, why, the farmer sold his products for less than it cost him to grow 'em," asserts the old-timer.

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"What we've really had, then, is PRODUCTION FOR PLENTY BY FARMERS AND PRODUCTION FOR SCARCITY BY MANUFACTURERS?" asks the young man.

"Any sort of farm policy has to take all this into account," the older farmer continues. "If the farmers cooperate in order to increase their bargaining ability with industry, in the long run it will help industry as much as it does the farmers. When rural folks have more money, they buy more things—so the people they buy from have to increase production. And when industrial production is increased, a certain amount more jobs are to be had—and more city people can afford to buy what the farmer grows. It's sort of a circle that goes round and round."

"Well, farmers have been doing their job more and more efficiently for a long time now," says another man. "Even with the heavy overhead they have to bear, it looks to me like better farming would cut their costs enough to give 'em more returns in the long run."

"But what about drought and insect plagues that sweep away all a farmer earns in good times?" someone asks. "WON'T CROP INSURANCE HELP, by making the farmer feel more secure against the lean years?"

"Perhaps," answers the old-timer, "but one way or another, it looks like the Government is in the swim to stay, as far as helping rural income is concerned. And HELPING RURAL INCOME WILL BE HELPING TO TAKE CARE OF THE SOIL."

WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT OUR BAD LAND?

"If the farmer can't help himself in protecting good land, how in the world can he be expected to do anything about the land already ruined or so near ruined folks can barely exist on it?" is asked.

"That's where a national land policy is absolutely necessary," someone replies. "It's a cinch individual farmers can't do anything about submarginal lands. Some areas have been exploited to the last ditch—and the Government must do whatever is done.

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"In grazing regions where grass still lives it might be possible to adjust the number of cattle or sheep on the range to the best carrying capacity of the range, of course figuring on the basis of a steady yield.

"But BUYING UP SUBMARGINAL LAND is about the only way actually to get it out of operation. In the dry plains areas many farmers probably would have to be resettled somewhere else on better land. But that's not the only place—the South has sections where part of the people ought to be moved, and so have the North Central States. There are plenty of local problems."

"That means a policy of NATIONAL OWNERSHIP OF SUBMARGINAL LANDS, like our ownership of NATIONAL FORESTS," the young farmer remarks. "Why couldn't areas be zoned for good land use? Wouldn't that be a real step toward sure-enough conservation?"

"WE NEED TO PLAN TO MAKE UP FOR THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST," the old-timer says thoughtfully. "It seems to me any first class land policy in one way or another would have to ASSURE FARMERS OF A REASONABLE INCOME for the work they do. And if farmers want to increase their income, they'll have to cooperate both in production and marketing.

"Then we ought to be sure LAND IS USED FOR THE PURPOSE IT BEST SUITS. Basically, that means real conservation, real saving the soil.

"And then we've got to have an ADEQUATE FOOD SUPPLY all the time. The whole Nation ought to think of its food supply as an ever-normal granary.

"Where farmers felt such a program was for the national good and their own good as well," persists the old man, "it would take continued cooperation in local planning and national planning from a far-flung, long-time point of view. SOME INDIVIDUALS HAVE WASTED NATURAL RESOURCES which are basically the people's.

"After all, what does conservation mean? It's the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest possible period of time—but you've got to figure on what

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folks need today, as well as the needs of the young folks who'll take up where we leave off."

What points about saving the soil have these people missed? What would you add? Why?

Do you agree that we have generally allowed our natural resources to be wasted? If so, what do you think can be done about it?

DO ALL THE PEOPLE depend on natural resources and DO ALL THE PEOPLE GET THE BENEFITS of them? Why or why not?

Is it true that in the LONG RUN what hurts the national welfare also HURTS THE INDIVIDUAL'S WELFARE? What examples can you think of?

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MORE ABOUT SOIL CONSERVATION

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

Material on State and local aspects of the soil conservation problem has been prepared by and is obtainable from the Agricultural Colleges of many States. The National Resources Board's "State Planning—A Review of Activities and Progress," June 1935 (price $0.75), summarizes the work of the States.

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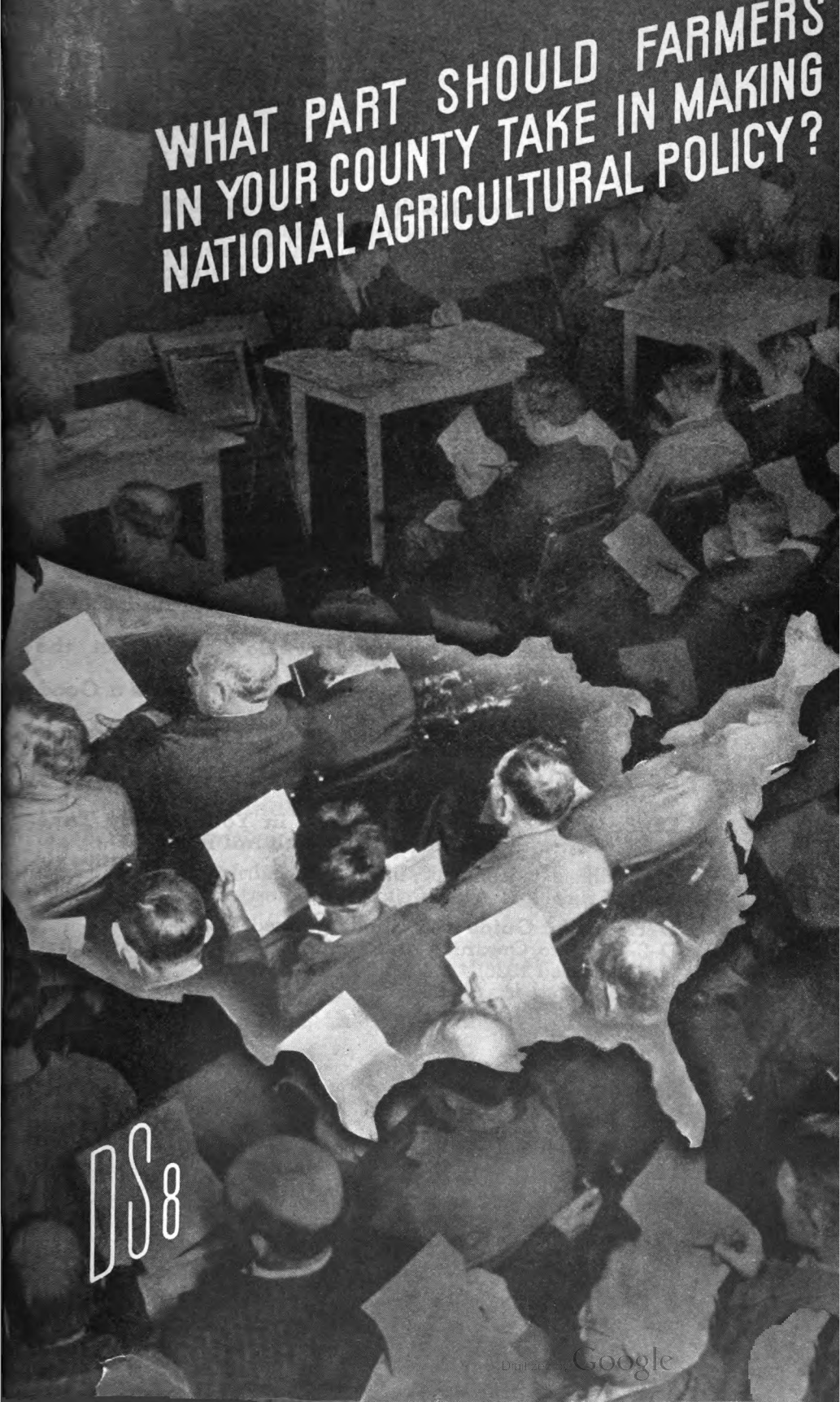

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This pamphlet is the eighth of the materials prepared for the assistance of rural discussion groups in 1936–37 through the cooperation of the Extension Service and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. It is not intended to direct attention to any particular point of view or conclusion, and no statement contained herein should be construed as an official expression of the Department of Agriculture. The materials listed below attempt to present, in readable, non-technical language, discussions of issues related to rural life. Their contents are not offered as either complete or orderly presentations, but as collections of current facts and attitudes which may be of use to rural people who are thinking about these questions for themselves.

Materials have been prepared for the 1936–37 season on the following topics:

DS–1. What Should Be the Farmers' Share in the National Income?
DS–2. How do Farm People Live in Comparison with City People?
DS–3. Should Farm Ownership Be a Goal of Agricultural Policy?
DS–4. Exports and Imports—How Do They Affect the Farmer?
DS–5. Is Increased Efficiency in Farming Always a Good Thing?
DS–6. What Should Farmers Aim to Accomplish Through Organization?
DS–7. What Kind of Agricultural Policy Is Necessary to Save Our Soil?
DS–8. What Part Should Farmers in Your County Take in Making National Agricultural Policy?

Two pamphlets on technique, intended primarily for the assistance of leaders of rural discussion groups and forums, are also available:

D–1. A Brief Guide to Methods (revised 1936).
D–2. How to Organize and Conduct County Forums (revised 1936).

United States Department of Agriculture

The Extension Service and the
Agricultural Adjustment Administration cooperating
(Photograph by Department of Agriculture)
December 1936

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WHAT PART SHOULD FARMERS IN YOUR COUNTY TAKE IN MAKING NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY?

Participation by farmers in making farm policy has been increasing in recent years. Do you think this tendency is good, or not? Why? If you approve, what form do you think policy-making by farmers should take?

1. **What part in national farm program-making do you think should be played by**
   - (a) **individual farmers?**
   - (b) **county committees?**
   - (c) **county agents?**
   - (d) **state administrators?**
   - (e) **agricultural colleges and experiment stations?**
   - (f) **federal administrators and economic advisors?**
   - (g) **farmers' organizations?**
   - (h) **political representatives?**
2. **What activities are going on in your county now that have a bearing on national agricultural policy? How could their effectiveness be improved?**
3. **Do you think farmers in your State should work on a State plan to go into effect in 1938? If so, what should be the chief features of the plan?**

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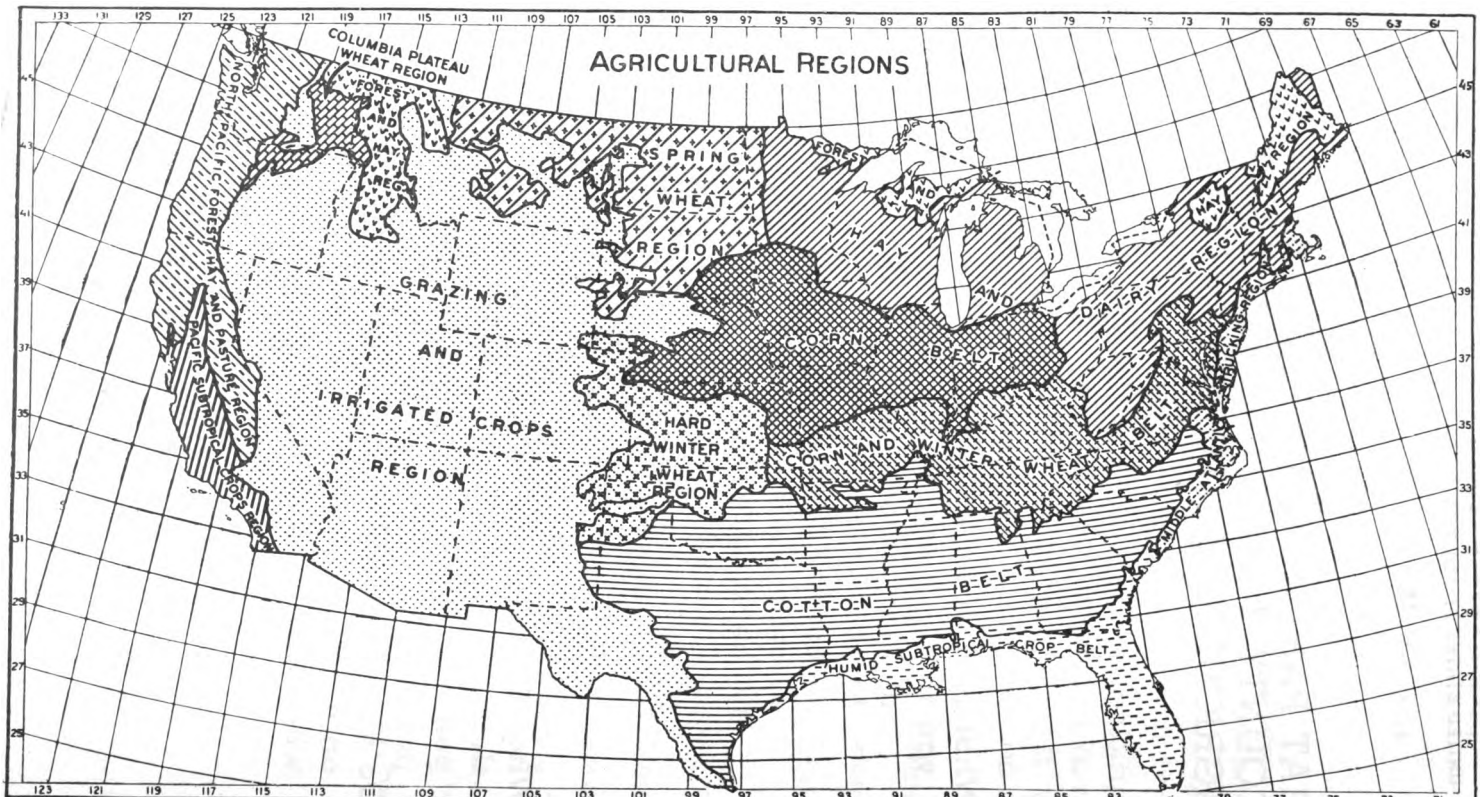

Regionalized Types of Farming

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WHAT PART SHOULD FARMERS IN YOUR COUNTY TAKE IN MAKING NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICY?

"Well, THEY CAN VOTE, can't they?" In some county groups, this reference to political control is the first idea that comes to the surface in response to a question as to the farmers' part in agricultural policy-making.

"Well, suppose they do vote," comes one rejoinder. "WHAT GOOD WILL IT DO THEM? You know as well as I do how often party platforms are written just to catch votes. We've all seen candidates who weren't so keen about some things after election as before. To my way of thinking, marking a ballot is just signing a blank check for a group of fellows who'll forget you the day they take office."

"If farmers didn't do anything about national agricultural policy but mark ballots, I'd be inclined to agree with you," a third member is heard. "A good part of our political troubles comes from people thinking that they've done all that's required of them as citizens if they just show up at the polls. Goodness knows there's plenty of them don't even do that. They'd howl all right if anyone deprived them of their vote, but they don't mind depriving themselves of it.

"According to my idea, IF FARMERS ARE GOING TO HAVE A REAL PART in forming national agricultural policy, THEY'VE GOT TO MAKE KNOWN THE REAL INTERESTS OF AGRICULTURE, and develop the leadership to express them. We hear a lot about business sentiment being for or against this or that political measure. Farm sentiment can be just as much a factor in national policy, and we ought to make it so and keep it

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so. Agrarianism has played a big part in the history of this country from time to time, but the times when farmers have insisted on having their say in the way the country is run have usually been bad times. Now it looks to me as though the bad times have usually come from policies that went wrong in good times. What we need is to keep pegging right along at national policy year in and year out, good year and bad year, and see that our people have a share in making national decisions."

SHOULD FARMERS FORM PRESSURE GROUPS?

"That's exactly right," comes from an enthusiast sitting near the speaker. "What we farmers ought to do is to organize ourselves into AN A–1 PRESSURE GROUP. Pressure politics wins the day every time, and we need to put a good stout crowbar under national policy and roll things over in our direction for a change instead of letting the other fellows have it all their own way."

"I wonder if pressure politics makes national policy?" queries another member. "I grant you that there's no reason for farmers to sit by and let other groups skim the cream off the national wealth. But if the bankers grab all they can, and the workers grab all they can, and the railroads grab all they can, and the farmers grab all they can, do you think that all those grabs add up to national policy?

WHAT MAKES NATIONAL POLICY?

"Certainly every group in the country ought to have a pretty clear idea of what its interests are. But I myself believe that unless all the groups in the country can RECOGNIZE THEIR PARTICULAR INTERESTS AS PARTS OF THE NATIONAL WHOLE, we won't get a national policy. I'm for farmers' interests getting consideration, and farmers seeing to it that they do. But I'm also for consideration of the interests of other groups. To my mind, a good national policy is one which so adjusts the

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various interests in the country as to provide the greatest mutual benefits."

"Right," agrees a friend. "This depression ought to have taught us that when the cities are having hard times the farms of the Nation can't hope to do well. If things are to go smoothly in this country THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE ECONOMIC SET-UP HAVE GOT TO BE FITTED so that all the wheels can go round together, and I think a good many groups have learned that."

"So you say, but there's a lot of other groups that haven't," a skeptic adds darkly, "dog eat dog is the way the economic game is played, and farmers who want to look out for themselves had better realize it."

"I'm not such a pessimist as you," speaks up someone from the other side of the room, "but I'd like to see us come at this problem from another angle. Suppose farmers do take a continuing interest in the condition of agriculture, and suppose that they do get recognition of the interests of agriculture in the national policy. Where are the concrete features of that policy going to come from? Policy is all right in its way, and you have to have a general policy before you can get anywhere, but what then?

HOW DO POLICIES BECOME PROGRAMS?

"Suppose you get the other groups in the country to agree that farmers ought to have a fair share in the national income. Well and good, but WHO'S GOING TO WORK OUT THE STEPS by which that fair share is brought into being? If policies are to be turned into programs, somebody has to do it. Otherwise, policies will remain pious wishes. I don't want to see that. They say hell is paved with good intentions, and I don't want to see farmers start a big public works project there."

"Right you are," comes a voice in support. "Up to now we've been talking about the legislative side of the farmers' movement. A policy gets its start in the ideas

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of small groups of people who find themselves in agreement. It gathers momentum and by and by a political group takes it up and makes it part of a legislative program. Still later, it gets legal expression through a State legislature or through Congress. But most laws are not very detailed. When they are detailed, they don't fit, especially in a country as big and as varied as ours. THE ADMINISTRATION OF A LAW, the way it's carried out, IS AS IMPORTANT AS THE LAW ITSELF—sometimes even more important. Now we've heard how some of the people in this group feel about the legislative side of agricultural policy. I'd like to hear what some people have to say about how agricultural programs should be administered."

•

HOW SHOULD FARM PROGRAMS BE ADMINISTERED?

"The whole thing ought to be administered by the central government," the speaker is vigorous. "The trouble with farm folks is that they don't pull together. Some of us gee while the rest of us haw, and all we do is to tangle up the harness. We want someone in the driver's seat who will gather up the reins and say hep! and first thing we know we'll all be moving off up the road in good style."

"Hold on, now," counters a neighbor. "Farmers aren't mules, if they do sometimes act like them. No matter if your driver could start us off in the best direction in the world, I'd be against it, because I believe that people in a free country ought to go places because they know where they're going and believe that's where they ought to go, and not because they're driven."

"I have another objection," chips in a man who is known for his good farming. "I myself don't believe that a central government, as your driver, could know what is the best direction, especially in a country the size that ours is. The local differences are too big, and too important. I believe that ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY, like legislative policy, HAS TO BEGIN OUT NEAR THE

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GRASS ROOTS. There are certain things that the central government ought to do in working out a farm program. But just as no farm program can be sound politically that doesn't have the backing of the bulk of the farmers, no program can be sound economically that doesn't look for its basic facts in the agricultural counties of the country where the farming is carried on. At least, that's the way it looks to me."

"Any program that works has got to look to the counties for more than information," adds a neighbor of the speaker. "Farmers need to be in on the making of programs, all right. But the best program in the world won't run itself. The way a program is handled locally may make all the difference between success and failure. Farmers need to be in on operating the program as well as framing it."

WHERE DO SPECIALISTS COME IN?

"There's another group of people besides farmers and administrators who have to be in on this," contributes a youngster just out of college, "and that's the specialists. Good agricultural policy can't be made without THE HELP OF A GREAT DEAL OF SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE. Some of that knowledge is the fruit of experimental investigations of soils, plant and animal breeding, farm management practices. Some of it is the fruit of economic investigations of prices, movements of population, levels of consumption and the like. If farmers are to live well in this complicated world, we'll need to take advantage of the work of experts in these fields."

"To bring this discussion right close to home," says a man who prides himself on being practical, "WHAT OUGHT WE TO BE DOING HERE IN THIS COUNTY toward making policy for agriculture?"

WHAT ABOUT THE COUNTY PLANNING PROJECT?

"Well, a good many of us here worked on the county planning project last year, and some of us old-timers

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have served on road commissions and school boards since goodness knows when," supplies the father of the college boy.

"That county planning project is nothing but a piece of play-acting," the skeptic's voice is heard again. "Our county's too big for your county committee to do anything but guess at figures, and when you're through the higher-ups aren't going to pay any attention to them anyway."

"I've seen lots worse figures than those we handed in last year," replies the father evenly, "and last year was our first year at it. I think we have a better idea of what's what in this county than ever before, as a result of that work. We know what's happening to our soil, and we have an idea of what we might do to save soil and improve income at the same time. Even if what we did had no value to anyone beyond the borders of this county, I think it would have been worthwhile for showing us how we can BALANCE OUR PRODUCTION RIGHT HERE AT HOME."

"That's a turn I wouldn't like to see the project take, just the same," the man who is known for his good farming re-enters the conversation. "To my way of thinking, this county planning project has, in the economic field, the same kind of possibilities if used right, and the same kind of dangers if used wrong, as the formation of a farmers' movement in the political field. If we use it so that it gives us a clear idea of our county's resources at the same time that we get a clear idea of other counties in our region and other regions in the nation, then I think it's the biggest step forward in years.

"But on the other hand if we use it with an eye to seeing how nearly self-sufficient we can make our own county, and recommend changes in the agriculture of our neighborhood without any regard for what is being done in other neighborhoods, we're likely to be worse off when we're through than when we started."

"That reminds me of what I read in the paper a while ago," interrupts the boy just out of college. "A German

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Where Do You Think the County Planning Project Is Heading?

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chemist was over in this country and had seen some of our experiments in finding industrial uses for farm products. He said that while Americans are trying to divert food to industrial uses, Germany is trying to turn waste products of industry into food. I remember thinking, 'There's self-sufficiency for you. Why shouldn't we trade?'"

CAN THE COUNTIES WORK TOGETHER?

"Yes, that's the trouble with efforts at self-containment. To my mind, the doctrine that the open door is at home has a catch to it. People who go through the open door into the nation are apt to go next through the open door into the region, then the open door into the county, and finally to find that all those doors are trap doors which shut behind. We want to keep this county planning project headed the other way. We want first to know just what we've doing here in the county. Then, we want to figure what changes, if made by us along with all the other agricultural counties, would build a farm program that would be better all round than the farm practices we have today."

"If we're going to put such a program into effect, WE'LL HAVE TO WORK MIGHTY CLOSELY WITH OTHER COUNTIES," speculates the college boy's father.

CAN THE STATES WORK TOGETHER?

"Yes, and how big a chance do you think you have of doing it," the skeptic rejoins. "Mark my words, after 1938, when the farm program comes back to the States, every State group is going to try to make a plan that will push the products of its particular State and let the rest go hang.

"That sort of thing is happening all the time. State legislatures pass laws that materials for State buildings must be bought whenever possible within the limits of the State. State relief agencies do not recognize the claims

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of those who haven't legal settlement in that particular State. We'll have the same thing in agriculture, if State plans go through. First thing we know there'll be 48 little AAA's, all operating on the basis of each-man-for-himself. Mark my words, that's what's going to happen."

"Well," the county committee member deliberates, "things might turn out that way, if folks went at the project without thinking it over. But I'm not ready to admit that that's how they're going at it.

"After all, the farmers of this county aren't so green at farm program making as you seem to think. We've had enough experience to see where the each-man-for-himself principle gets us. What has already been said here shows that a good program has to be built out of the special contributions of different kinds of people, or rather, of people in different kinds of jobs.

"The local facts from which the program is set up, and the local administration by which the program is put into effect have to be provided by us farmers. County figures need to be fitted together by states, and recommendations looked over by the state agricultural specialists. The job of the national administrators is to take a bird's-eye view of the whole situation, and FIT THE STATE AND COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS INTO A WORKABLE WHOLE which the states and counties can then administer. How does that strike you?"

HOW SHOULD COUNTY COMMITTEES BE CHOSEN?

"It strikes me that if the county committee is going to have as important a job as you say," a new voice is heard, "the selection of that committee is a pretty important matter. I'd like to know how people feel about that. Should committees be voted for, should they be picked by state or local officials, or should existing committees select the men who are to follow them? How long should committeemen serve?"

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"If you're going to get into that, there's a point I'd like to raise," a merchant from the county seat speaks up. "Farm income is bound to be affected by the programs your committees make; in fact, adjustment of farm income is one of the big aims in making programs. Now farm income in this country is first of all important to the 25 percent of our people who live on farms. But the size of that income means everything not only to the actual farmers, but to the further 20 percent of our people who live in villages and towns in rural areas. The teachers, doctors, lawyers, the merchants like myself who do our business in country districts depend on the income of the farmers just about as much as the farmers themselves. Where do we come in? Oughtn't we to have a place on county planning committees?"

"The question of how county committees should be made up," replies a man sitting near the merchant, "really needs to be discussed from two angles. You've just mentioned groups closely concerned with farm income yet without a voice in agricultural policy making. That's one side of the matter. The other is how to relate the several groups that are now concerned with one or another of the local phases of farm policy-making, so that we can get to work on policy for the county as a whole.

"Now here's what I want to know. If we are going to get down to business on this county planning proposition, DON'T WE NEED TO GET ALL THE DIFFERENT GROUPS IN THE COUNTY TIED IN WITH THE COUNTY COMMITTEE, at the same time that we look around and see what interests there are in the county that haven't a chance to be heard under the present set-up?"

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Do some of the previous speakers represent your point of view? If so, can you quote additional facts to support what they said? If not, can you give a brief statement of the case as you see it?

What facts have been collected with regard to the agricultural situation in your county? In the light of these facts, DO CHANGES IN FARM PRACTICES SEEM DESIRABLE? How do proposed changes affect your farm?

Do you think the county planning project is a desirable part of national agricultural program-making? On what reasons do you base your answer?

Just how will a planning program for your COUNTY have to take account of a STATE program? a NATIONAL program?

The following three goals have been suggested for a national farm program to be built out of the work of county committees:

(1) Conservation of soil and land resources.
(2) Reasonable farm prices.
(3) Production of sufficient quantities of farm commodities to supply city consumers at reasonable prices.

What do you think of these goals? Would you prefer to replace them with others? Can you suggest additions to the list?

What do you regard as the most important first steps to reach the goals you have in mind?

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MORE ABOUT FARM POLICY MAKING

(Quantity prices may be secured on many of these publications)

Material on county trends has been prepared by the Agricultural Colleges of many states for use by the county agricultural planning committees. These charts, graphs and descriptions of local changes may be obtained by writing the State Agricultural Extension Services.

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