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**PART 7**

**Essentials of  
Agricultural  
Policy**





## Some Essentials of a Good Agricultural Policy

by HOWARD R. TOLLEY <sup>1</sup>

**IN THE** farm problem as a whole and in this book which tries to present the farm problem as a whole, there are many tangled threads of facts, ideas, struggles, needs, and dreams. Straightening out these threads and weaving them into a strong fabric of agricultural policy suited to democracy is the job of farmers and statesmen. This article attempts to disentangle some of the threads and show the kind of American homespun they can make. The author begins by asking what farm people today want in terms of a good life. He tries to define these wants and show the sources from which they spring. Then he asks, what would be the fundamentals of an agricultural policy in which these wants of the people were the warp of the fabric? Next he gives the broad pattern of policy shaped by these wants during the past decade. The fabric, he says, is far from perfect; it must be and can be strengthened and improved; but because its warp threads are the needs and wants of today, it will not change basically in character so far as we can now see. If we face the present honestly and do not fool ourselves and if the trend of events is not violently twisted by such developments as might occur in a world war, we can look a little way into the future.

<sup>1</sup> Howard R. Tolley is Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of O. V. Wells and Russell Smith, of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, in the preparation of this paper.

THE dominating fact in any consideration of American economic problems is perhaps that in many ways our economy is approaching maturity. There are many signs of this maturity, such as our change, still comparatively recent, from a debtor to a creditor status among the great states of the world; the prospect of our having fairly soon a stable population; and especially the passing of the physical frontier. All of these have important implications for policy, as they have in our thinking as a Nation, but none is more important than the end of the frontier. Many of the major trends of contemporary agricultural policy—of national policy, for that matter—stem directly or indirectly from the consequences of the passing of the frontier. Moreover, this maturing process is characterized by a growing complexity. Far more than was true of past societies, every part of ours is interwoven with every other part, until the impact of change anywhere sends tremors through the whole network.

Until a few decades ago most people were born, grew up, and died in relatively stable surroundings, physical and cultural. To people living today, on the other hand, change has become as familiar a fact of everyday life as space and time themselves. This awareness of change tempers all our thinking. We are conscious that the consequence of drift, the passive acceptance of change, sometimes is disastrous; we have seen the effects of change upon the individual; finally we have been forewarned by events around us that those things we look upon as good must be guarded more zealously than would be the case in a more stable time. On the other hand the very fact that the past is the seedbed of the future means that work done today will bear fruit tomorrow. We of today may labor amid a changing order confident that what we do will have its influence. Upon the wisdom and energy with which we deal with our problems hangs the issue of whether that influence will be for good or ill.

It is within the context of such a time that the essentials of agricultural policy are to be considered. The first article in this volume (*The Farmer's Changing World*, p. 103) called attention to the sharp departure in governmental policy involved in the efforts of Government to meet the demands with which agriculture taxed it at the beginning of the decade just past, and to the need for a reexamination of the issues presented in those efforts. The author continued:

Perhaps the most effective way to do this is to resurvey the position of agriculture in relation to our whole national and economic structure, with a view particularly to determining the forces that tend to affect agriculture adversely. In so doing, we should be able to determine how, and at what points, agriculture is out of balance with the rest of the economy and to appraise the various lines of action most appropriate for meeting the situation.

Some of the subsequent articles in the Yearbook are devoted to this objective. They bring out the need for action to deal with the problems dictated by change. And in the world of the middle twentieth century, in which the march of events has been telescoped beyond previous human experience, this need becomes imperative in other fields besides agriculture. A sense of the immediacy of contemporary problems runs throughout contemporary thought and literature.

But the implication of the material in this Yearbook is not that government by sweeping fiat should move militantly upon the Nation's

problems, agricultural or otherwise. Rather, the emphasis is upon the encouragement of democratic channels of national energy and confidence, national consultation and decision, national tolerance and accommodation of views, together with the recognition that international affairs also have their bearing here.

### **THE "GOOD LIFE" FOR FARM PEOPLE—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO THEM?**

Before one considers what is desirable in agricultural policy, it is appropriate to define "desirable" and to glance at the sources of policy. In the long run, the desires of the people themselves must be the determinant. It is they who issue the charters of policy. These charters are often mutually contradictory; sometimes they are no more than a vigorous negation of an unpopular policy, without approval of a substitute. Through the processes of legislation and administration, policy is hammered out into detailed form and becomes concrete in programs. Yet, in the last analysis, these concrete details are accepted or rejected by the people, so that policy rests ultimately upon their desires as a base.

If policy is looked at as an expression of popular will, the thing to do is to try to arrive at some understanding of what the people, the farm people in common with their fellow citizens of other groups, think it should try to achieve for them.

In the effort to understand what farm people want, few objects of study are more rewarding than the ways in which Government has attempted to meet the demand of farmers for equal economic status with other groups in an industrialized world. As the impact of the Machine Age began to be fully felt after the Civil War, the Farmers' Alliance succeeded the Granger movement, the Populists succeeded the Farmers' Alliance, and still other vehicles of agrarian unrest followed the Populist movement. The Spanish-American and World Wars silenced the outcries briefly, but always they were renewed with increasing volume, because none of the responses of Government fully sufficed to right what the farmers regarded as their inferior economic position. Throughout the earlier years, the clamor of the farmers was for regulation of railroads and trusts, for credit and currency reform, for innumerable other actions by Government, but always it was for some action that would restore the economic dignity enjoyed by agriculture before the Civil War. In this century an extension of governmental efforts to comply with those demands has been apparent.

What are the common denominators in all these waves of action and reaction? What does the farmer want in terms of his own life when he insists upon equality for agriculture? What, in brief, does he regard as the elements that would go to make his life a good life?

#### **Food, Clothing, and Shelter**

To start with the most common of all common denominators, the average rural American wants food. He wants it three times a day and enough of it. His unfavorable reaction to the existence of agricultural commodities in quantity too great to be distributed by our economic system while at the same time great numbers of persons

suffer want has been clearly expressed in recent years. Food, even more than houses or clothing, is the great fundamental necessity.

The inability of this country thus far to make its economy get food to these who need it and are willing to work for it is more dramatic than the corresponding inability to make houses and clothing available to those who need them. Yet both failures are of the same character. The disastrous effects of weakened purchasing power, perhaps aggravated by the imbalance of costs and prices, upon the housing and clothing industries have been clear to everyone in recent years. The need and demand for more and better houses, for more and better clothing, has persisted. It is unnecessary to pile up such evidence as the figures on housing shortages, even for those people who are well above the average in income, or the estimates of the acres that would be required to produce fibers to clothe the ill-clothed.

### **The Newer Fundamentals**

But to the classic triumvirate of past generations—food, clothing, houses—ours has added other necessities that it regards as so basic that they must be grouped with those three. For one thing, it has become clear in the last few years that the great majority of people in this country need better medical care than has been available to them and that included in their broad demands for higher living standards is a desire for better health. The success of governmental attempts to bring more nearly adequate medical facilities to rural people, the development of group-health movements, and the wide agitation for a new national health policy all indicate the genuineness of this desire and the need to satisfy it in one way or another.

For our times, too, it has become equally essential for people to have means of ready transportation. The expansion of living standards that has gone on steadily in the United States and is considered by most people the outstanding characteristic of this country is dependent in large part upon facility of movement. Hence, good roads and means of using them must now be included among the necessities if we are to move toward the spread of this higher standard of living among all the people. Means of communication are almost equally important, from this point of view, and are rapidly becoming more significant. It is impossible, too, to ignore the growing desire for devices for home and farm that will reduce the drudgery too often associated with farm life. Obviously, the rural people of this country, more than any other group, stand in need of the essentials enumerated in this and the preceding paragraphs.

### **"Not by Bread Alone"**

There is an intangible to be added to these tangibles, partly produced by them and in turn influencing them. Rural people, like everybody else, must feel at least some measure of security in the enjoyment of the fundamentals of the good life. This does not mean the kind of stability that conditions have imposed upon some other countries, the quiet of a strangulating economy or the rigidities of a society laid down in unchanging strata. It means that the average man wants to be able to look forward to the conduct of his life free from fear of events over which he has no control. If this assurance can be added to the

elements outlined here, then truly the citizen will be prepared to live well.

For it is true that no man ever remains satisfied with bread alone, once he has achieved enough of that. In any passably adequate definition of the true desires of the people, therefore, those elements are to be included that do not contribute simply to material welfare.

Prominent among these essentials are schools. It is perhaps the greatest contradiction between the democratic theory and its practice that the rural schools of this country are as poor as they are. The country child today does not have the opportunity to obtain schooling as adequate as that afforded most city children. Yet from the rural areas come the majority of the country's children. The eagerness of rural people to take advantage of schools when they are available is attested from all sources and in turn attests that educational opportunity is one of the elements of the good life that they are striving to obtain for themselves.

The desire of farm people for improved transportation and communication for economic reasons has already been mentioned. Those two necessities are likewise important for a social reason. The drudgery of farm life is stressed no more often in modern writing dealing with agriculture than is the isolation, and this isolation is one of the most difficult barriers to the achievement of the good life individually and a strong, rich, homogeneous culture nationally. Greater opportunity to take part in social activities, however, involves other elements than transportation and communication. Indeed, nearly every factor involved in raising standards of living contributes to this greater opportunity, as do more leisure, the development of group participation in political and economic life, and many others. Of the urgent need for a better social life there seems to be no doubt, if the reaction of farm people when the opportunity is offered is a gage.

Thomas Jefferson wrote 130 years ago: <sup>2</sup>

I have often thought that nothing would do more good at small expense than the establishment of a small circulating library in every county to consist of a few well-chosen books, to be lent to the people of the county under such regulations as would secure their safe return in due time. These should be such as would give them a general view of other history and particular view of that of their own country, a tolerable knowledge of geography, the elements of natural philosophy, of agriculture, and mechanics. Should your example lead to this it will do great good.

Few rural people even now have access to more than an infinitesimal part of the reservoirs of human thought stored in books new and old. Only infrequently are they able to have even the newspapers and periodicals that city people take for granted.

Many others of the softer threads woven into the rough fabric of living and enjoyed by other groups of our population are not for most farmers. Even the more well-to-do farmers may be without some of the advantages of city people merely because of the circumstances of rural life. For the poorer farmers this lack is aggravated by their poverty. The point is not that any particular activities are necessarily to be sponsored by the Government. If government makes it possible for people to have more leisure or greater income, the point

<sup>2</sup> WASHINGTON, H. A., ed. WRITINGS OF THOMAS JEFFERSON . . . v. 5. 1853. Letter to John Wyche, pp. 448-449.

would be the same. The provision of the opportunity for people to build a desirable life is what is important. It is not important whether this is done by government or otherwise; nor is it important whether government directly provides employment in cultural enterprises or merely makes it easier for people to share in them.

Very significant has been the development by rural people of their own means of self-expression, even when their material circumstances would apparently make it difficult for them to interest themselves in such things. Some investigators have cited the survival, through times of poverty and distress, of native folk arts such as square dances and handicrafts and the revival in late years of folk singing to illustrate the latent resources of our rural culture. Where highly commercialized agriculture has not altered the basic patterns of rural thought, these folk arts seem to flourish with vigor. Such response means that people are hungry for the interpretations of themselves and their own lives that the arts can give. The Nation may be only dimly aware of the richness of the cultural soil that awaits seeding. Here is a factor in the good life that farm people miss more than most others.

One of the great essentials for such a life is that a man have the opportunity to feel valuable, to feel that his work is of use and worth. Men do not like to feel that they are the victims of forces over which they have no control. The farmer, for instance, does not want to feel that great cyclic depressions will rob him of the chance to make a living or that other unmanageable disasters hang over him daily or yearly. In a sense, this is the same desire for security mentioned earlier. Not that men demand absolute assurance that their efforts will be successful; what they want is the assurance that they can work and struggle for some reasonably achievable end.

Finally, every man needs to feel that he is working with and is part of a group of his fellow men. Partly, this feeling arises from self-interest. The farmer has learned that he can ordinarily achieve more for himself as a member of a group than he can working alone. But, equally, cooperative endeavor in work, as in social activity, satisfies a deep-rooted desire.

There has been abundant evidence of this in recent years. There are the remarkable records of participation by farmers in the various referenda that have been held in connection with Government programs, and the eagerness with which farmers for a quarter century have availed themselves of the chances to get together afforded by the State and Federal extension services and other organizations. The pronounced development in the last 25 years of cooperative-marketing groups illustrates the desire of farmers to work together for collectively beneficial ends. Finally, there has been a strong response by farmers to the new opportunities offered them to participate in community undertakings, to function as members of committees dealing with farm problems and helping to administer farm programs, and in other group activities not previously available to them. They have almost uniformly seized the opportunity not merely to attend meetings and sessions but to function with enthusiasm and effectiveness, and have demonstrated clearly that the traditional individualism of the agriculturist is not of the kind that prohibits successful cooperation.

It seems clear that the opportunity to assume the full dignity of the mature citizen of a democracy is one of the things that people desire. Therefore this opportunity should be included among the elements that make up the good life.

### THE NATION'S STAKE IN THE GOOD LIFE ON THE FARM

Up to this point we have considered elements pertaining primarily to individuals and secondarily to farmers as a group. What is the Nation's interest in the attainment of the good life both by individual farmers and by agriculture as a whole? The Nation's principal interest in agriculture, aside from its interests in farmers as citizens like other citizens and in the production by farmers of an adequate supply of food and fibers, is that agriculture assume a status equal with those of other elements in the economy. A depressed agriculture obviously is a millstone about the Nation's neck. Agriculture must prosper if the Nation is to prosper—though the converse is true also, of course. The Nation also looks to agriculture to contribute to a well-rounded national culture, fully representative of the national life. Then, too, it must look primarily to agriculture for conservation of natural resources and for the cultivation of another resource—human values—among people engaged in agriculture. The Nation has a definite interest in the reinforcement of the sense of personal dignity, of the citizen's importance as a citizen. Indeed, this may be regarded as a dominant interest, for the health of any state depends upon the free intelligent functioning of its citizens.

The entire Nation, then, has a stake in seeing that its farm people have a chance at the good life. How far is it possible to say that the constituents of such a life, as roughly outlined, have so far been made attainable to the farmers of the United States? If the yardstick of what rural people want is applied to what they now have, much remains to be done before it can be said that any large number of them have attained very many of these elements of the good life or attained them in any large proportion.

For a generation or more the slogan of vocal farm groups has been "equality for agriculture." This has arisen from the feeling of farm people that they cannot now earn enough from their labor to enable them to buy for themselves, individually or as a group, to the same extent as other groups, these elements of a good life.

For instance, to take the denominator that is most readily usable, agriculture represents about 25 percent of the population, yet has less than 10 percent of the national money income, despite some progress in late years toward giving agriculture proportional status. Since farm families rear about one-third of the Nation's children, it is obvious that many of those children, in a money economy such as now exists, start life at a grave disadvantage compared with other children in the Nation. It has been estimated that 22 percent of American children suffer from malnutrition, and there is little evidence, even inferential, that rural children are much if any better off than urban in this respect. The prevalence of cash-crop farms as well as bitter poverty imposes an ill-balanced diet upon great groups of farm people. The evidence points to a relatively worse

position for the farmer with respect to clothing and housing. As many as 50 percent of farmers are believed to live in inadequate dwellings, and probably one-third of them are poorly clothed.

Aside from the over-all inequity of the status of agriculture, there is imbalance within agriculture. It has been estimated that about 24 percent of all farm families in 1935-36 had less than \$500 on which to live for a year, that at least 15 percent were "in dire physical need," and that "one-fourth to one-third of all our farm families are still below the poverty line."<sup>3</sup> Erosion still claims, despite great efforts, 3 billion tons of soil a year. So much for the material situation of agriculture. Figures upon many nonmaterial elements are hard to obtain, but it is known that rural school terms are shorter on an average than those of city schools and that teachers in rural schools are paid less than their urban colleagues. More than 70 percent of the entire rural population is without public-library service. And observation shows that all too few country families have any opportunity to enjoy music, pictures, plays, or movies. As citizen and worker, the farmer is still without effective control over the fruits of his labor, and he is still unsure that he can act to make his needs and desires known.

In conclusion this may be emphasized: The wants and desires of those who people the countryside of the Nation are not static and will not go unvoiced. Their conception of what makes up a good life will continue to evolve with the changing times, and their struggle to convert that concept into reality will go on.

### FUNDAMENTALS OF A GOOD AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Once some agreement has been reached as to the elements that rural people regard as essential to living a good life, the next question that logically arises is, how are they to obtain these elements? In terms of this discussion, how do these desires become translated first into policy and then into action designed to obtain the things they want? There can be little debate as to the ways in which they have obtained in recent years such of these elements as they have obtained. The last decade has given convincing demonstration to farmers of the value of group organization that moves aggressively on their behalf. There is no doubt whatever that the disposition of agriculture is to continue and expand this type of action. Symptomatic of this state of mind is this statement by the editor of a farm periodical:<sup>4</sup>

The farmer today demands a standard of living in keeping to the contribution he makes to the national economy. He sees no reason why he should not enjoy most of those conveniences found in our cities and towns as a matter of course. But to obtain all those things takes money, far more money than farmers 40 years ago dreamed of having. Automobiles, tractors, radios, bath tubs, washing machines, refrigerators, etc., must be bought. To buy and maintain them the farmer must produce far above the animal needs of his family, and he must sell his products at a fair exchange value.

When farm prices were low back in 1920-25, the farmer faced a choice. He could take what might be dished out to him and sink back into a state of chronic

<sup>3</sup> MADDOX, JAMES G. SUGGESTIONS FOR A NATIONAL PROGRAM OF RURAL REHABILITATION AND RELIEF. *Jour. Farm Econ.* 21: 881-896. 1939. (Figures used by Maddox from: [UNITED STATES] NATIONAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE. CONSUMER INCOMES IN THE UNITED STATES: THEIR DISTRIBUTION IN 1935-36. 104 pp., illus. 1939. Washington, D. C.)

<sup>4</sup> ROBERTS, CLARENCE. THIS ISN'T 1900 DOWN ON THE FARM. *Daily Oklahoman* Dec. 3, 1939, sec. D, p. 4. 1939.

poverty. Or, he could make a fight for a share of the national income which would permit him to live in decency and on a level comparable to men in town who render a like service to the nation. In the good old traditional American spirit he decided to fight. He is demanding government aid, not because he believes in aid as such, but because it seems at the moment the only attack on his problem that will get results.

Thus farmers have learned that group pressure will yield certain results, and few will deny that in justice they richly deserve the results they have obtained. New devices of consultation, cooperation, and administration looking toward the satisfaction of these demands will become major components of agricultural policy in the future if that policy mirrors the wishes of the people.

Discussion of such questions as these inevitably brings up related questions as to the interrelation of the popular will, the legislative process, and the administrative process; perhaps even of the place, in this framework, of the judiciary and of the great body of technical competence available in contemporary culture. Where do all these things fit into the makings of national policy? Perhaps the matter will be clarified somewhat by this quotation from Charles A. Beard, setting forth what he calls a "bill of axioms or aphorisms for public administration":<sup>5</sup>

(1) The continuous and fairly efficient discharge of certain functions by government, central and local, is a necessary condition for the existence of any great society.

(2) As a society becomes more complicated, as its division of labor ramifies more widely, as its commerce extends, as technology takes the place of handicrafts and local self-sufficiency, the functions of government increase in number and in their vital relationships to the fortunes of society and of individuals.

(3) Any government in such a complicated society, consequently any such society itself, is strong in proportion to its capacity to administer the functions that are brought into being.

(4) Legislation respecting these functions, difficult as it is, is relatively easy as compared with the enforcement of legislation, that is, the effective discharge of these functions in their most minute ramifications and for the public welfare.

(5) When a form of government, such as ours, provides for legal changes, by the process of discussion and open decision, to fit social changes, then effective and wise administration becomes the central prerequisite for the perdurance [continuance] of government and society—to use a metaphor—becomes a foundation of government as a going concern.

(6) Unless the members of an administrative system are drawn from various classes and regions, unless careers are open in it to talents, unless the way is prepared by an appropriate scheme of general education, unless public officials are subjected to internal and external criticism of a constructive nature, then the public personnel will become a bureaucracy dangerous to society and to popular government.

(7) Unless . . . an administrative system is so constructed and operated as to keep alive local and individual responsibilities, it is likely to destroy the basic well-springs of activity, hope, and enthusiasm necessary to popular government and to the flowering of a democratic civilization.

Can it not be said, in the light of these words, that policies are, in the first place, proposed by the people, and that, in the last place, they are judged by their effectiveness in the daily lives of the people? A corollary would seem to be that the more continuously and the more in detail policies are proposed and judged by the people, the better will be the chances of those policies for success. In other words,

<sup>5</sup> BEARD, CHARLES A. ADMINISTRATION, A FOUNDATION OF GOVERNMENT. (Extension of remarks of Hon. James A. Shanley, quoting Beard's speech before the Society of Public Administration.) Cong. Rec. Jan. 15, 1940, p. 557.

policies are outlined by the people in broad sweeping mandates, often inconsistent within themselves and usually very general in terms. The legislative branch of government gives these policies form and, to a certain extent, harmonizes them. The administrative arm develops and administers programs to give effect to the policies. But the "well-springs of activity, hope, and enthusiasm necessary to popular government" will be tapped throughout all these stages in "the flowering of a democratic civilization."

Policy, therefore, cannot be taken to mean simply a rule laid down by the people or their legislative or administrative representatives and then left to operate in a vacuum untouched by the necessities of circumstance. The mere statement of such a view seems to refute it. The realistic view is that policy making is a part of the daily, detailed living of the people and the functioning of their government in all its branches. If the formation of policy is conceived as being of this character, the powerful directive force of popular will throughout the process is apparent.

### POLICIES IN ACTION

In turning from the general to the specific in policy, the present may be serviceable as a key to the future. If it does no more than instruct us in mistakes that can be avoided, such a survey will be useful. In this instance, we can discover much more than mistakes. In the policies of today, formed as they have been in response to emphatic though generalized instructions of the people as a whole, it is possible to see, at least partly, the shape of some of the things to come.

Contemporary agricultural policies have been pursued in a time when many nonagricultural influences exerted strong pressure upon farmers for good or ill. Agriculture is of course bound up inseparably with the total economy. This fact and others have limited and will continue to limit the directions that agricultural policy may take.

In the first place, agriculture has been faced since 1929 with an industrial situation in which available labor has far outrun available employment. This has meant that the rural population has backed up on the farm simply because alternative opportunities for employment could not be found. So long as this condition continues, a very considerable portion of the agricultural population is likely to engage in what is essentially subsistence rather than commercial farming. The result is a popular demand for the solution of problems associated with subsistence and submarginal types of farming and with such groups as migrant laborers and sharecroppers. If full employment is again reached in this country, with a prospect for sustained expansion, the measures proposed for today or for the several years immediately ahead may be altered.

A second limitation that conditions policy is the fact that, although agricultural production is becoming increasingly efficient, the market for agricultural products is no longer unlimited. Since the World War a number of forces have tended to increase either the efficiency of production or the actual quantity of products. The demand for the products has not increased at the same rate as the farmers' ability to produce them. Our foreign market has been severely curtailed, and it is doubtful whether any sustained improvement can be expected

until an enduring peace is achieved in the world. Even then it is unlikely that the foreign market will absorb all the surpluses this country would like to sell. But a potentially large market at home among those who at present have inadequate purchasing power remains to be fully explored.

A third condition governing policy is the diversification of American agriculture; each commodity, region, and class of producers has its particular problem. This diversification is due in part to the fact that farmers of the United States supply one of the greatest free-trade markets in the world—their domestic market—and in part to the extremely wide range of physical conditions that affect or limit crop production.

A review of some of the objectives that contemporary policies seek to attain will be more enlightening if the forces just discussed are kept in mind. Broadly, these objectives may be said to be of three general types: (1) Activities designed to increase incomes of farmers who produce commodities for sale on a commercial scale; (2) the efforts to raise incomes and to improve the living conditions of migrant laborers, sharecroppers, subsistence farmers, victims of drought or flood, and others at a disadvantage within agriculture itself; and (3) activities designed to encourage better land use and more efficient production.

Most governmental programs of both the distant and the recent past have been directed toward improvement in the condition of commercial agriculture. It appears now that the last two of the groups of activities just listed will receive increasing attention in the immediate future, but to a considerable degree all three are interwoven. The problems of none of these will be solved separately; to some extent whatever approaches are made to solutions will be interdependent.

Issues of two kinds have been dominant in commercial American agriculture in the last quarter century: (1) Those associated with maintaining prices of the things farmers produce and incomes of the farmers who produce them; and (2) those associated with the existence of a large potential market for farm products that could not summon the buying power to buy the things farmers could and did produce, though this domestic market was badly needed because of declining foreign markets. Along with these two most prominent problems of the last 25 years there has been a whole complex of difficulties associated with credit, taxes, debt, land values, high risk in proportion to return, and other similar factors. These difficulties may be considered as a third major problem partly arising from and partly influencing the two others.

A previous article in this Yearbook (*The Development of Agricultural Policy Since the End of the World War*, p. 297) has recited in illuminating detail the history of the fight of farmers in the past two decades to attain "equality for agriculture" in the Nation—a fight for improvement all along the front indicated by the three groups of problems just named. This struggle illustrates the manner in which the desires of the people progressed from scattered, relatively ineffectual expression to legislative recognition and finally to actual administration. First, popular demand forced farm organizations to get together and agree upon their principal aims; then it pressed

heavily upon public agencies concerned with agriculture; next it urged remedial measures through the legislative branch; and finally, when thwarted by executive action, it helped to bring about a change in the national administration itself.

As a result of the vast educational program to which this struggle subjected the whole Nation over many years, farmers and other groups have become conscious of the tremendous untapped consuming power of the American people. The loss of a great volume of export trade naturally has underlined this interest. Efforts to deal with the problem of unsalable surpluses and hungry people no doubt will receive increasing attention in the years ahead. This development will be discussed first.

#### **Efforts to Increase Buying Power**

At present, efforts to increase market demand include the development of the surplus purchase and other programs, especially the food-stamp program, designed to increase consumption among the low-income groups of the Nation; the encouragement of research in an effort to lower marketing costs and to improve marketing methods; and a wide variety of devices used to hold or regain the foreign market for such agricultural products as cotton and wheat.

One of the biggest marketing problems is to find a way to dispose of surpluses. Recently the use of these surpluses to improve the diets and living standards of low-income families has been explored. The Federal stamp plan has been an extension of this idea. Investigation of its possible application to cotton illustrates that it has potentialities for other commodities than food. A marketing program of this kind not only improves health and living standards but should be decidedly profitable to the farmer by moving into consumption many surpluses that now depress market prices. The surplus-commodities stamp program is still in the experimental stage. Further experience may show the need for many changes in detail, but something of this kind appears to offer distinct benefits to both farmers and consumers. In principle the food-stamp plan is similar to an export dumping program—with the one important difference that domestic consumers get the advantage of it.

In general, it may be said that consumption subsidies will be used to bring about better diets, better health, and better living standards generally for those families that are not now able to buy enough good food and clothing. The people of the country have evinced a growing concern for the conservation of surplus agricultural products in the widest sense—that is, use. Not only are farmers interested in stabilizing market prices through the disposal of surpluses; providing machinery to aid the underfed and undernourished has taken on the quality of a moral interest as well.

The steps that will be taken to hold or regain the export market for agricultural products will depend in part upon the extent to which any such device may be of help over a short period. Export subsidies have been used to retain the Nation's position in the world markets for cotton, wheat, and some minor commodities, and what are essentially barter arrangements have been resorted to in order to move some surplus agricultural products into the export market. Any sat-

isfactory development of foreign trade depends chiefly upon the achievement of an enduring peace among the nations of the world in order that the fight for national self-containment may be stopped. The United States itself has contributed in considerable degree to the decline of its foreign market, and in the last few years the reciprocal trade agreements program has been in part an effort to undo some of the things which this country itself did earlier.

Involved in the whole problem of the export trade are certain emotional attitudes of people, including farmers. Notably, it is a human trait to ignore the fact that trade means an exchange of commodities—that it means buying as well as selling. Thus the tendency is to ignore the fact that if a Nation wants to sell its products abroad it must buy products from abroad. Then, too, there is a strong emotional pull among all groups of people toward economic as well as political isolation, and this pull exerts an influence upon any effort that might be made toward extension of foreign markets for agricultural commodities.

### **Control of Production and Marketing**

A major phase of the policy of maintaining prices and incomes in agriculture has been the attempt to adjust supplies to market demand. This attempt, it may be said parenthetically, was in direct response to the insistence of farm groups. The working out of this policy has led to the development of what is known as the ever-normal-granary program. This program includes acreage allotments or conditional grants and benefit payments, commodity loans, and marketing quotas for use in years when supplies are excessively high. Taken together, these devices are designed to stabilize acreage, production, and marketings in such a fashion as to increase farm incomes while at the same time insuring adequate supplies for both the domestic and the foreign market.

A great deal of progress has been made in the application of policies such as that embodied in this program, but much is still to be worked out. Certainly, crop acreages can be controlled, marketing quotas can be administered, and commodity loans can be effective devices for preventing wide fluctuations in prices. Acreage control tends to increase efficiency of production, since it is usually so administered as to allow farmers to maintain their best land in production and since a reduction in the chief cash crops is also a reduction in the acreage of the chief soil-depleting crops, so that the farm plant is usually improved and potential yields are increased. This means, of course, that unless new consuming power is tapped, the control problem will become increasingly difficult as the program is continued.

Marketing quotas, in turn, ordinarily cannot be invoked unless a critical condition exists, and even then farmers usually operate under quotas so adjusted as to allow them to market all the products grown on their acreage allotments. A considerable degree of control is thus lost, and commodity loans must be depended upon to obtain a considerable part of the desired market adjustment.

The commodity loan is essentially a device to stabilize prices. Loans can be set at rates that will result in undue accumulation of stocks. On the other hand, the loan rate may be fixed at such a level

that it will offer genuine support in years when supplies are excessively large; the rate also may be restrained from following prices up in years when supplies are reasonable.

So long as appropriations can be obtained for payments to supplement income from the market place, the question as to how they shall be distributed among the different commodities will be raised. To the extent that such payments are made, they can be used to supplement returns from the sale of those commodities the prices of which are lowest in relation to the prices of other agricultural products. Payments of this kind may be regarded as an integral part of an agricultural program, the separate phases of which are harmonized. Such questions are already receiving the attention of administrators of agricultural programs.

It is now realized that the process of marketing involves a large number of difficult and important problems, which can perhaps be classified in two groups: (1) Regulating or adjusting the existing market machinery to make it operate as smoothly as possible, and (2) encouraging fundamental changes to improve the system itself.

For many years the Department has been responsible for several kinds of regulation and service work, including, for example, the regulation of commodity exchanges, the inspection of food products, the provision of grades and standards, the development of a Nation-wide market news service, and many others that are important. Since 1933 the Department has developed an additional program of market regulation through marketing agreements and orders (see p. 638). This device makes possible more effective cooperation among farmers in the interests of orderly marketing. The agreements and orders appear to have a permanent place in the marketing of dairy products, fruits, and vegetables. They enable producers of these crops to regulate the amount and rate of shipment to market and to exercise a certain amount of control over the quality of the products marketed, which in many cases has proved profitable to farmers.

Less progress has been made, however, in bringing about any fundamental changes in the marketing system. Research and regulatory programs have been concerned with adjustments to make the present system operate as well as possible, but there is a growing realization that the farmer, the middleman, and the consumer would all benefit from more fundamental changes to increase the efficiency of the marketing system as a whole. The farmer is getting less than 50 cents of each dollar the consumer spends for foods. This does not mean that all middlemen are getting rich. It does mean that a thoroughgoing analysis of the marketing process is needed, along with a careful study of possible improvements in transportation, processing, and distribution.

A fair start on this problem has been made during the last few years—enough to show that very substantial savings could be made. But if much is to be accomplished in this direction an intelligent interest on the part of the public, as well as more research, is needed. If efficient marketing is desired, the growth of interstate trade barriers and various forms of price fixing will be stopped, and policies will encourage the growth of any type of marketing that is efficient and will not attempt to maintain inefficient types.

### Financial Adjustments

The third problem that dominates efforts to bring about a healthy commercial agriculture is really a complex of problems, including those connected with credit, land values, debt, costs in relation to income, the risk of loss through natural causes, and many others. Two of these problems will be considered at this point—insurance against risk and the provision of credit.

Crop insurance is a comparatively new field of governmental activity, and few developments of the last decade are more attractive to the commercial farmer. The possibility of insuring crops against loss from natural causes would have excited derisive comment a half century ago in the belief that even if the plan were feasible, it would be madness to underwrite farming in this way. Such crop insurance systems as are now operating appear to have met this criticism adequately. But it seems safe to say that farm people will not want crop insurance used as a method of permanently underwriting farming in areas not adapted to farming or of bulwarking waste of the soil.

The provision of adequate credit is another element on which there is likely to be continued popular insistence. The fight for a more nearly adequate agricultural credit system was started shortly before the outbreak of the World War in 1914 and has continued to the present. As a result, a reasonably adequate system exists for commercial agriculture. The problems in this field, however, are by no means solved.

The several governmental credit agencies that serve the commercial farmer are finding it increasingly necessary to coordinate their programs and their efforts with those of agencies carrying on other parts of the agricultural program. To a considerable extent, these governmental credit agencies now provide certain yardsticks against which the credit charges and the policies of commercial lending agencies can be measured. One of the most important of these yardsticks is the method of appraisal used in extending farm-mortgage credit. The appraisal of farm-land values on the basis of normal yields and normal prices exerts a stabilizing influence. It seems clear that more attention will be paid to the systems of farming followed, especially as they affect conservation. The adoption of a variable amortization schedule would be a further stabilizing influence in that it would allow farmers to decrease their indebtedness at a rapid rate in good years and to carry on in bad years when their means of repayment were limited.

### The Importance of Conservation

Conservation of soil and of human resources is inextricably bound up not only with the practices of commercial farming but with the condition of the generally underprivileged noncommercial farming group. It is a truism nowadays that education of farmers by itself is inadequate as a means of enabling them to maintain their resources. Poverty, the farm-tenure system, the economy of the individual farm and of whole farming areas and regions, and a host of other factors all have a bearing on the extent to which conservative methods can be used in production. Economic conditions affect conservation of natural resources, and on the other hand soil waste affects the economic condition of farmers, commercial and noncommercial.

Since the extension of farming into areas subject to recurrent drought and the realization that many farm people in some of the rougher and more broken sections of the country can never expect to attain the standard of living they desire, there has been a growing public demand for acquisition or control of considerable areas of submarginal land by some public agency, county, State, or Federal.

One of the major methods of obtaining better land use is through the acquisition and operation of forest and submarginal farm land by public agencies where such lands are of a character that makes private operation clearly inadvisable or inefficient.

The more commonly advocated programs of this sort are those for Federal acquisition of submarginal land and for county and State control of tax-reverted land, usually also submarginal. Federal acquisition has proved slow, complex, and subject to many restrictions, some of which are not inherent. Federal purchase has been a slow process because, for one thing, some people do not want to sell their land and because title must be obtained through a cumbersome legal process. Even more important, there is a feeling on the part of many county governments that Federal purchase destroys the tax base for county and State revenues. Most important of all, there is always the problem of where the people who are to be evacuated from the submarginal areas can relocate.

County and State control of tax-reverted lands offer much for the future. Aggressive action by these agencies can go far toward achieving genuine national conservation of resources, especially if reasonably adequate standards can be established for the repossession of such lands and for methods of operation. A pronounced popular trend in this direction has been apparent in recent years, and it may become strong enough to promote aggressive action. If that occurs, programs for public purchase of land can profit by the lessons of the past. Popular opinion also points toward the supplementing of purchase programs by some specific program for giving displaced people a means of livelihood.

Only recently has there been widespread realization that our land resources are limited, or at least that the greater portion of the more productive, more easily cultivated land is already under cultivation and that soil erosion has been taking an enormous toll. This popular realization commands the Nation, even though conservation means more efficient production and, perhaps, added unmarketable supplies, to try to stop soil erosion and to adopt such conserving practices as are needed to maintain the productivity of the land.

Conservation is required because we are unable to forecast future land needs, because the better lands are now occupied and it would require more labor and increased costs to shift production to poorer land, if that became necessary, and because of the popular demand for stabilizing agriculture on the better land in order that adequate housing and operating facilities may be supplied and community life may achieve its best possibilities.

Current policies designed to relate conservation with the acreage-allotment and conditional-grant approach to income raising and crop control have met with favorable popular response. Perhaps the national interest will require that those obtaining benefit or price-

adjustment payments in connection with the allotment program follow a system of farming that will more fully conserve the soil or control erosion than do their present systems.

Public credit agencies are giving increased attention to the problem of conservation, and indeed some of the private lending agencies, especially insurance companies, are already experimenting in this field. It may be, for example, that the present wastage clause in the farm mortgages of public agencies will be replaced by a specific requirement that land be protected from wind and water erosion by the carrying out of certain specified practices. Perhaps farmers will call for new ways of handling foreclosed farms and farm lands. The transfer of farm lands in submarginal areas to public control and the sale of farm land in certain areas only in units of sufficient size to provide for commercial operation are other instances of the avenues that the people may feel that Government should take.

### **Social Adjustments**

When policy turns from the problems of the commercial farmer and of conservation to those associated with what has been called non-commercial agriculture, it abandons familiar for less charted pathways.

The thesis of the following paragraphs is that agricultural policy in the future will take into account many elements that it has ignored or dealt with only lightly in the past, but that have been brought to the forefront of national thinking by the trend of popular opinion. Put in another way, this thesis is that the old patterns have proved insufficient for new or newly recognized problems. The pressure of the people upon the land and of wasting land upon people; the stride of technology across the country, smashing old ways of living, in seven-league boots; the drive, engendered by the economic environment, for efficiency in agriculture at the expense of humanity; the altered state of the world at large—these are some of the problems pressing upon individuals, and therefore upon groups and upon Government. The problems are of such a nature as to make it almost certain that people will demand new approaches for their solution—approaches in line with our own traditions but capable of developing new patterns of American life and opening new opportunities for achieving the things our farm people want.

It will help to promote agreement upon the nature of the problem, and perhaps on policy, if some facts about noncommercial or subsistence farmers are surveyed. The major aspects of the problem are the poverty of the people in this group and the possibility that this poverty will be aggravated in the future unless current programs change the outlook. Fifty percent of all American farms produce only 10 percent of our commercial farm products. More than a million and a half men and boys of working age who lived on farms registered in 1937 as partly or wholly unemployed save for emergency public work—and 1937 was a relatively prosperous year for agriculture. Only one out of six received public employment, while considerably more than half were wholly unemployed. Other statistics that would emphasize the plight of this group could readily be given.

The prospects for the future are less generally recognized than the present situation. Although knowledge of the effects of technology

upon the employment of farm labor is fragmentary at best, enough is known to indicate clearly that nothing has happened to reverse the trend of the past century. In that time, the number of man-hours required to produce 100 bushels of wheat from 5 acres dropped from 288 in 1830 to 125 in 1880; and at last accounts it stood at 49. The same kind of thing has happened in the case of other commodities and other aspects of agriculture besides production. Every year about 400,000 farm boys reach working age, 18 years. Yearly, about 110,000 farmers die, and somewhere near the same number go into other occupations or retire. Allowing for other factors, it appears that every year until 1960 at least, about 200,000 farmers between 18 and 65 years of age will be added to the number now on farms. In other words, there will be a 23-percent increase in the number of farmers in the next 20 years unless the movement of farmers to cities accelerates.

The immediate conclusion that emerges from recent experience in dealing with such problems as these figures imply is that there is emphatic public endorsement of programs for the rehabilitation of farm people. Americans are nearly unanimous in their hostility to direct relief if they can find any other way out of pressing miseries, and the use of rehabilitation instead of direct relief seems to fit in with that sentiment. A successful rural rehabilitation program requires a combination of vocational guidance and credit based on character. This means, in effect, that in granting a man credit, his character is more important than the collateral he can offer and that a representative of the rehabilitation agency sits down with him and works out a farm plan that offers both the farmer and the agency a good prospect of success in a mutual venture. The general approval of such work in the past argues for its extension and elaboration in the future.

Further developments may include new ways of combining loans and outright grants of aid, still with rehabilitation as the end in view; and new techniques for fitting plans of operation to the farms. By such means the present method of rehabilitation can be made more useful.

The reestablishment of tenant families as owners provided for in current programs, also appears to have popular endorsement; and despite the relative slowness of this method, it is likely to be expanded in the future. The use of subsidies or direct governmental action to deal with certain kinds of problems has had wide popular support in recent years. The social-security program and the various proposals for a Federal health program are examples. Rural education is likely to be included in this group, especially since farmers bear much more than their proportionate share of the cost of rearing and educating the young people of the Nation.

There is a vigorous general opinion to the effect that rural young people, whether they are to remain on farms or to migrate to the cities, where they help to maintain the urban population, should be brought up in homes in which at least a minimum standard of living prevails and that they should be properly educated. There is also considerable demand for the development of better medical facilities in most rural areas. There are now enough doctors and nurses in the Nation to supply adequate medical service for all of our population, but both

doctors and nurses, as well as hospital and laboratory facilities, are concentrated in the larger cities. It is likely that more attention will be given to means of attaining a better distribution and providing medical service at a reasonable cost for farmers with low incomes.

The provision of better educational facilities involves a reconsideration of our whole system of rural education. Possibly there will be a demand for establishing minimum educational standards in length of the school term, subjects taught, and training of the teaching personnel. For the present, certainly, it is doubtful whether any considerable number of rural States can or will go forward in this field, and for this reason there may be increased sentiment for some kind of Federal program that, while not infringing on State and local prerogatives, will guarantee minimum standards, even though it involves an increased subsidy or grants-in-aid.

Rural housing and living conveniences present another problem in this group. In this field the most striking recent experiment has been public action to make electric power more widely available to farmers. Within a short time the number of farm users of electricity has approximately doubled, and there have been notable advances in methods of distributing electricity and electrical appliances at prices that farmers can afford.

The various developments touched on here can be summed up from the standpoint of a broad attitude or approach.

Government in the past decade has assumed the responsibility for rectifying as nearly as it can the unequal position of agriculture within the national economy. This was in response to overwhelming mass demand. There may be a similar demand within the next decade for rectifying inequities within agriculture itself.

An illustration is the demand from many rural sections for better housing. Another is the demand for a program that will give work and supplementary income to unemployed and disadvantaged rural folk, doing for them what various programs have done for some urban groups. This is not the place to enter into debate as to the cost of such programs, or their self-liquidating character, or other controversial details. Use of such a method by Government, when it becomes necessary, does appear to be as legitimate for rural as for urban people.

There may also be a more insistent demand in the future for further development of part-time farming, subsistence homesteads, and cooperative farms, with which there has been a limited amount of experimenting in recent years. A large and increasing number of farm people, especially near cities and towns and along the principal highways, have sources of income that are partly agricultural and partly nonagricultural. Many farmers are practicing a very primitive and essentially subsistence type of agriculture. There are many migrant laborers and tenants who can never hope to become owners. All of these groups are likely to press harder for a solution of their problems in the years ahead.

In other words, policy will make use of the crude patterns developing in society itself. The trend toward part-time farming already exists. If farm families can become part of a community organization, if the spread of industry into rural areas can be stimulated, then part-time farming that is underwritten, at least to some extent, by Govern-

ment may be one of the most effective cushions against economic shocks.

Similarly, the patterns of subsistence farming and of the family-size farm already exist. Subsistence farming of the type common in, say, pre-Civil War days has no significance now. But a type of farming designed to make use of technological advances, community planning, group organization, and new avenues to some supplementary income—this kind of subsistence farming holds much promise as a way out of difficulties for thousands of farmers. It would also carry on the tradition of the family-size farm, which has been a symbol of free agrarianism throughout this country's history.

The success of cooperative loans for equipment and for medical services and of related testings of group action encouraged by Government leads to the belief that people may demand more energetic and persistent efforts in this direction as a part of agricultural policy in the future. Perhaps the most interesting of the discoveries growing out of experimentation in this work has been the effect of cooperative activity upon the people themselves, aside from questions of the improvement of their economic status. The evidence seems clear that group endeavor has promoted a healthful attitude, socially and psychologically, and this is a very real though imponderable gain for individual and Nation alike.

Among the depressed groups in agriculture are farm laborers. Unless their situation is improved through such means as have already been discussed, the prospect is that they will present a problem distinct from those of other agricultural groups. They are increasing in numbers and becoming increasingly industrialized. The agricultural ladder, by which they formerly climbed to tenancy or ownership, has been shattered ever since the World War. Unless it is repaired quickly, there will be a demand for wage and hour legislation for a more or less permanent class of agricultural laborers at present exempted from legislation designed for industrial workers. For migrant laborers there is already a demand that the States or the Federal Government at the very least provide labor camps that will give these people a decent place to live and that their children be given educational opportunities that will enable them to become valuable citizens of a democracy.

### **POLICIES OF THE FUTURE**

The current agricultural programs and the policies from which they spring have been examined in some detail in this article in a search for conclusions as to what the future may hold in store. What broad generalizations can be made from such a summary?

One such generalization is that the policies of the future will tend to reconcile the old and the new in the political, economic, and social aspects of agriculture. This task of reconciliation has been described by M. L. Wilson as follows:<sup>6</sup>

The solution, as I see it, lies in combining the best of the new with the most enduring of the old, and in political-social-economic-educational policies that strive to keep the social mechanism sufficiently simple for fundamental popular

<sup>6</sup> BAKER, O. E., BORSODI, RALPH, and WILSON, M. L. AGRICULTURE IN MODERN LIFE. 303 pp., illus. New York and London. 1939.

understanding—whether in terms of reason or of prevailing folklore. Otherwise democracy cannot survive, and violent clashes of interest and ideologies will follow. The practical social understanding that was provided by the folklore of the self-sufficing culture does not apply to the new world of specialization and interdependence. The environments are almost complete opposites. The abruptness of the transition is fundamentally responsible for the greatest social tragedies of this age. The task of today is one of compromise and qualification. Our future now lies . . . in combining *some* dependent specialization with *some* individual responsibility, in joining *some* group and cooperative activity with *some* personal self-sufficiency. This will give mankind a chance to assimilate culturally the great mass of novelty that science and technology have already created.

Consideration of one major policy of the present, the maintenance of farm income through crop control, calls for a look at the future of acreage and marketing control, of commodity loans and price-adjustment payments as they apply to the basic commodities. Agriculture's ability to produce these commodities in quantities equal to or in excess of domestic and foreign requirements clearly indicates that adjustment and stabilizing efforts may be expected to continue, though the results achieved may not always be entirely satisfactory even to those who are most directly benefited.

Given different conditions from those to be expected within the more or less predictable future, the necessity for such controls may disappear. One such set of conditions would be the full employment of the working population, whether in industry or in agriculture. Perhaps domestic measures or free flow of world trade may bring about such conditions. Perhaps it will be possible for the Nation to work out ways of supplying its needs with reduced manpower and at the same time of giving all employables useful work and a high standard of living. But, to be realistic about the matter, none of these developments can be expected within any reasonable period. Until they occur, the problem the controls are designed to cope with will remain. It is to be expected that these mechanisms will be refined, perhaps modified, as experience dictates, but to discuss policy under the assumption that we can dispense with them does not seem profitable.

After all, such programs are essentially equalizing devices designed to provide farmers with an opportunity to obtain the advantages that labor obtains through organization and that business obtains through concentration of financial control, with a structure that allows costs to be cut by reducing production when demand is depressed.

Although increasing attention will be given, perhaps necessarily, to price maintenance, the effort to maintain prices at a reasonable cost to the Treasury is almost certain to drive attention back toward acreage and marketing adjustment and regulation. It seems, too, that in response to farmer insistence upon continuance of programs of this type, some way must be found of affording a stable financial base for them.

Controversy has centered for two decades around policies for price maintenance and crop control. The main stream of thought thus may be said to be reasonably well defined, except for those unpredictable shifts and changes which are continually being dictated by the exigencies of the moment.

Credit policy for agriculture will continue to be important. In

part, the modifications in this field will be in terms of revising the more purely commercial types of credit that have developed through the last quarter of a century so as to relate them more closely to agricultural policies in fields other than credit. Other changes may be expected in the direction of further developing the credit functions now performed by the Farm Security Administration as part of its program of rural rehabilitation. This involves reasonably liberal loans to farmers whose resources are limited, based in considerable part on character and on the preparation of detailed farm- and home-management plans accompanied by technical supervision.

Efforts to develop better regulatory policies in marketing also will continue. Farmers feel that marketing and transportation charges are too high and too inflexible. Commodity speculation, especially, has long been a traditional devil for farmers and farm politicians. Speculation is now regulated, and we find ourselves increasingly concerned for marketing reform and improvement. But it must be remembered that marketing costs are chiefly compounded of wage rates, transportation charges, and the physical efficiency of the marketing system itself. Therefore any significant drop in the cost of marketing can be made only by bringing about greater physical efficiency—that is, by the utilization of fewer man-hours to perform each of the marketing functions mentioned. A spectacular reorganization that will greatly lower marketing costs in the near future is not to be expected. Consumers are demanding costly services. Some wage rates have increased. The quality of food has improved. With these trends we may do well to prevent further increases in marketing costs in the next few years. Nevertheless, farmers and consumers alike are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of marketing problems, and many groups of middlemen are becoming convinced that inefficiencies are unprofitable to them.

So far as better land use and soil and water conservation are concerned, it seems reasonable to expect a continuation of research and discussion, with a relatively slow but continued development in the field of action.

The idea of conservation, of saving the great natural resources of the Nation that, once gone, can never be replaced, and the argument that men should not be forced to spend their lives or their labor on land that is too poor to yield them a living even under favorable price conditions—such an idea and such an argument appeal very strongly to most men, if public response to these views in recent years may be taken as a guide.

But despite the sentiment and logic of the argument for conserving the soil and forests and working toward better patterns of land use, it is certain that the soil disappears slowly, that people are hesitant to question anything they are used to, and that the actual implementing of action programs of this kind can only gradually be achieved. In fact, if conservation policy is to be most fruitful, some way will be found for bringing the skills and services of technical conservationists to bear on other agricultural activities to the fullest extent. And if submarginal and forest lands are to be retired from cultivation, the farmers who are now on such lands will want, and their fellow farmers will want them to have, some place to go—where

they can find some new land to operate or can develop a new way of agricultural life.

The third great stream of agricultural policy includes questions of dealing with the great mass of low-income farmers and farm people and the problems primarily associated with them. These are the people who are least vocal, and theirs are the problems that are least clearly understood in an environment where it was once an accepted maxim that every honest man would die rich if only he were willing to work hard enough.

These are the people—and they account for one-third to one-half of all the farmers in the United States—who are most poorly organized and most frequently forced to depend upon the social conscience of others for support. From the preceding discussion, it may be said that the policies most likely to break new ground in the decade ahead will be the policies designed to benefit these disadvantaged classes.

First of all, it may be expected that the programs for commercial agriculture will give greater recognition to the small-scale producer and the family-size farm and greater security to certain classes of farmers whose operating risks are relatively high. This means increasing attention in the form of allotments, exemptions, and bonuses to the small-scale operators, and the continuation of crop insurance on wheat and its extension to other crops.

Second, a modification of some of our existing ideas with respect to conservation appears in prospect, as it becomes increasingly apparent that the land available to many farmers is so limited that they must usually seek to conserve soil through the use of farming practices rather than by shifting from soil-depleting to soil-conserving crops, about which so much has been heard during the past decade.

Third, the continued attention directed toward tenancy and the recognition of the evils of tenancy should gradually work toward the evolution of an intelligent tenancy policy. Traditionally, of course, Americans cherish the ideal of an unbroken agricultural ladder—of the farm boy starting as a laborer, working through several stages of tenancy and part ownership, and finally ending as full owner of a farm. This idea will persist and with it the effort to obtain increasing sums to finance a tenant purchase program.

But tenancy is not universally an evil, and there is little hope of appreciably bettering the condition of the 42 percent of farmers who are now tenants or sharecroppers if the country pins its hopes solely to an ownership program. Probably this fact will lead to popular insistence upon an intelligent and sustained drive for improving and stabilizing landlord-tenant relationships. This matter is also bound up with the success of some other agricultural programs and with the opening up of industrial opportunities.

Fourth, unless there is a marked expansion in commercial and industrial employment, the problems of a rational rural relief policy will be pressed more vigorously by a larger and larger number of people. So far, dependence has been placed upon a combination of Federal work projects, local relief, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and subsistence grants provided by the Farm Security Administration. Perhaps it is time to develop a rural conservation works program.

Certainly statistics given earlier on available farm manpower and its prospective utilization in present systems of agriculture point strongly toward increasing pressure for some such method of cushioning the impact of social and technological change.

Fifth, the rural rehabilitation program or its equivalent will be continued, but this is another field in which policy will be reoriented. Rural rehabilitation will be asked to do more than simply pick up members of farm families whose lives have been shattered by our current economic organization and endeavor to stick them back into the same kind of situation out of which they have just been forced.

That is, although rural rehabilitation will be continued, the general view is likely to be that the rehabilitation program should not be handicapped by being obliged to carry a burden for which it is not fitted. Perhaps one of the more important public debates of the decade ahead will turn on the question of how the acreage available and the payments made can be better distributed within agriculture.

But it may be that it will not be possible to find for many farm families the additional land and market necessary to supply a decent level of employment and even a minimum standard of living measured in American terms or the things other than land that many of them need. If not, in all likelihood the desires of the people will take two different directions. In the first place, they will seek ways of providing adequate medical care, education, and certain essential standards of living, including housing, roads, and the chance for amusement and relaxation for all the people. This demand probably will not be diminished by the opposing argument that considerable subsidies will be involved. In the second place, the prospect is that there will be popular insistence on devoting increased attention to the new way of agricultural life that is quietly developing in our midst—the combination of part-time agricultural employment in small-scale farming with other employment, in agriculture, in industry, or in a rural conservation program of the type mentioned.

Births in rural areas are currently running ahead of deaths by at least 400,000 annually. If our excess farm population remains on the land, it will demand employment of some sort. In part, this may take the form of producing goods and services for home use. But the old ideal of a completely self-sufficing farm economy is vanishing, if it has not already vanished, before the rising tide of urbanization; accompanying this urbanization is an abandonment of the old shibboleth of thrift and an acknowledgment of the great gulf between the nature of public spending and that of private spending. The constant infiltration of urban traits into the action and thinking of farm people is one of the most striking characteristics of contemporary rural life.

And why not? Why should farm people live in houses without the modern conveniences that city people take for granted? Why should farm women in some sections be forced to work in the field as well as do all the housework, when women of other groups do not? Why should farm people be expected to do without radios or that active comprehension of the modern scene which is fostered by the movie and the automobile? Why, even, should they limit themselves strictly to home-grown foods when the rest of the Nation eats fresh fruits and vegetables at times when they cannot be produced locally?

In the answers to these and other questions suggested in the earlier pages of this article, it may have seemed at times as if too much emphasis were being placed upon the responsibility of Government for trying to set the world right. Such an emphasis is in part inevitable. For one thing, it is only in recent decades that Government has assumed some of the responsibilities it should have assumed earlier; for another, in a discussion of policy in relation to Government, the role of the latter as compared with the role of the individual may bulk larger than it does in reality. If there appears to be too much of this emphasis, let it be said here that in the quest for a new way of life for farm people, Government's job ends when it has done what it can to free human potentialities. Government cannot confer success upon anyone; it can only help to give him a fair chance. In the performance of that function, Government has been forced to turn more and more directly to the people, as current national farm programs show. So long as this holds true, Government will not loom larger in the Nation's life than is proper.

The development of this new way of agricultural life will involve many experiments, but it seems to be foreshadowed in the demands of the people. Perhaps farming will never be an entirely stable way of life. All ways of farming, indeed all ways of life have their hazards, and this new way of life for the lower economic groups in agriculture means in the long run a strengthening of the economic base of rural society in all its phases. In turn, this cannot but benefit the Nation at large. Such a policy will be the product of the interactions that have been described earlier in this article, but if it is to be an agricultural policy that can be truly designated as "good" it will deal with the needs of every group in the agricultural population because it will reflect as fully as possible the desires of all groups. So shaped, this policy will at once give farmers of this generation a chance at the good life and at the same time conserve the human and natural resources from which will spring the life of the future.