FARMING DEMOCRACY: AMERICAN AGRICULTURAL POLICY FROM THE GREAT WAR TO THE GREAT SOCIETY

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The Supervisory Committee certifies that this ***disquisition*** complies with North Dakota State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

In the days of the early republic, agriculture provided more than just an economic foundation; it shaped the country socially, and politically, too. Thomas Jefferson and others wrote at length of the role farming played in the American moral and political order, but by the turn of the twentieth century, agriculture's share of the overall economy had declined, even as it became enmeshed in the emerging class question that was convulsing US politics. Farm policy followed that shift. While many historians of agricultural policy in the twentieth century limited their studies to the so-called farm bills and thus saw only commodity policy, US agricultural policy from Woodrow Wilson to Lyndon Johnson constituted a massive intervention in the lives and experiences of rural Americans. During this period, policymakers moved purposefully and emphatically beyond commodity concerns and aimed to remake rural life and farmer identity in the United States. They held as their model Thomas Jefferson's agrarian ideal, a nation of freeholders deeply invested in the preservation of the republic and their own contributions to its success. However, the Wilson administration and its successors went beyond Jeffersonian *laissez faire* to build a farm policy rooted in the worldview and methods of the Progressive movement: middle class values, concern for social uplift, a growing civil service bureaucracy, and modern scientific and statistical tools. These administrations demonstrated clear intent to wield farm identity as a tool of democratization, growth, and national cohesion not only within the American countryside, but in the nation at large and then around the globe.

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To adequately thank all the people who helped guide me through this process would require a book unto itself; without their efforts I never could have completed this undertaking. They have my eternal gratitude, and so I will attempt here to honor their work and to share what it has meant to me over the course of my time at North Dakota State University.

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DEDICATION

For Joe, my world.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA.....Agricultural Adjustment Administration

BAE.....Bureau of Agricultural Economics

FHA .....Farmers Home Administration

FAO .....UN Food and Agriculture Organization

FSA .....Farm Security Administration

HEW .....US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

OFAR.....USDA Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations

REA.....Rural Electrification Administration

USDA.....US Department of Agriculture

USDS .....US Department of State

USFA .....US Food Administration

WPA.....Works Progress Administration

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> *"Whenever there are in any country uncultivated lands and unemployed poor, it is clear that the laws of property have been so far extended as to violate natural right. The earth is given as a common stock for man to labor and live on. If for the encouragement of industry we allow it to be appropriated, we must take care that other employment be provided to those excluded from the appropriation. If we do not, the fundamental right to labor the earth returns to the unemployed. It is too soon yet in our country to say that every man who cannot find employment, but who can find uncultivated land, shall be at liberty to cultivate it, paying a moderate rent. But it is not too soon to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land. The small landholders are the most precious part of a state."*
>
> - Thomas Jefferson, 1785[1]

In his Foreword to Bill Winders's *The Politics of Food Supply,* James C. Scott presented as axiomatic that "the place occupied in other countries by a *rural* policy has been usurped in the United States by *commodity* policy. . . . Where the French, the Danes, the Germans, and the Norwegians have asked themselves what kinds of rural communities they wish to promote, what the rural landscape should look like, what land uses should be encouraged, and what rural services should be publicly provided, Americans have seldom posed such questions."[2] Instead, Scott claims, the United States cares only for questions of price supports and commodity interests. By contrast, this introduction shall demonstrate that the place occupied in other countries by economic and social policy was of necessity usurped in the early United States by *agricultural* policy. It could not have been otherwise, in a burgeoning continental nation of 4 million people, ninety percent of whom were employed in farming.[3]

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[1] Quoted in Jeremy Atack, "Tenants and Yeomen in the Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History* 62, no. 3 (1988): 6-32.
[2] James C. Scott, Foreword to Bill Winders, *The Politics of Food Supply*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xi.
[3] *The Story of U.S. Agricultural Estimates*, Miscellaneous Publication No. 1088, prepared by the Statistical Reporting Service, US Department of Agriculture (Washington, DC, 1969), 1, at https://www.nass.usda.gov/About_NASS/pdf/The%20Story%20of%20U.S.%20Agricultural%20Estimates.pdf

Rural and agricultural policy remained a pivotal concern throughout the 19th century and would be irrevocably transformed in the 20th, as a new generation applied Hamiltonian means to the pursuit of Jeffersonian ends—a republican empire whose values were proven true in the dignified lives of self-sufficient freeholders. Presidential administrations who served in a world defined by the Progressive Movement and its bourgeois, technocratic worldview wielded agricultural policy as an instrument of national unity and international leadership. By the time agricultural policy receded in national significance during the Nixon years, it was due not to the conservative backlash Nixon represented, but rather the triumph of the industrial model of agriculture, the Green Revolution, and Cold War *détente*. To the extent Scott's critique of US rural policy is correct, it is because that policy followed a changed rural economy.

This dissertation tells the story of the five remarkable decades from the presidency of Woodrow Wilson to that of Lyndon Baines Johnson—from the Great War to the Great Society—and the revolutionary transformation in US agricultural policy found therein. That narrative will occupy chapters two through six of the present volume. However, to fully appreciate the seismic changes wrought by these heirs of Progressivism, it is necessary to contextualize them against the backdrop of the structures of US policymaking and the history of agricultural policy during the long 19th century. The remainder of chapter one will consist of that prologue, followed by a review of the secondary literature to demonstrate why a fresh look at agrarian policy in the 20th century was needed.

Those who search the period 1789-1969 in search of an American rural policy that looks like modern France, Denmark, Germany, or Norway will be disappointed. Instead, to borrow the language of Deng Xiaoping, one must seek *agriculture policy with American characteristics*. US rural policy, like much in American political history, looks exceptional for both structural and

ideational reasons. As political scientist John Kingdon described in *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, successful policymaking is contingent on the confluence of three metaphorical streams: the emergence and identification of problems, the formation of potential policy solutions, and the shifting sands of political power across different areas of government. The United States is especially constrained in its ability to achieve the required convergence of opportunity, issue salience, and consensus. A 2011 review of recent works in comparative politics by Alfred Stepan and Juan Linz noted that out of 23 advanced democracies, more than half have only one electorally constituted "veto player"—a person or institution whose assent is needed to advance a proposed policy. The United States stands alone with four, including the states themselves, who must ratify any potential constitutional amendment. Aside from structural impediments, the power of *laissez faire* ideology has always loomed large in American political culture, as the following narrative will demonstrate. Despite these barriers, the Whigs and their successors in the Republican Party were nonetheless able to craft a forward-looking vision for American agriculture that would be picked up by the Progressive Movement.[4]

At the time of the Constitution's ratification one could fairly say, as a pamphlet from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Statistical Reporting Service later would, that "[the] business of the new Nation was largely agriculture."[5] The founding generation was unanimous in heralding the importance of farming for American political economy, as well as republican morality. As Jefferson famously wrote in his *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1785),

[4] John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (New York: Pearson, 1962), 196-204; Alfred Stepan and Juan J. Linz, "Review: Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States," *Perspectives on Politics* 9, no. 4 (December 2011): 844, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41623697.pdf.
[5] The Story of US Agricultural Estimates, p. 1, https://www.nass.usda.gov/About_NASS/pdf/The%20Story%20of%20U.S.%20Agricultural%20Estimates.pdf.

> Those who [labor] in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue. It is the focus in which he keeps alive that sacred fire, which otherwise might escape from the face of the earth. Corruption of morals in the mass of cultivators is a [phenomenon] of which no age nor nation has furnished an example. . . . [G]enerally speaking the proportion which the aggregate of the other classes of citizens bears in any state to that of its husbandmen, is the proportion of its unsound to its healthy parts, and is a good enough barometer whereby to measure its degree of corruption. While we have land to [labor] then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff.[6]

Benjamin Franklin largely agreed with his Virginian colleague, opining in 1769 that "There seem to be but three ways for a nation to acquire wealth. The first is by war, as the Romans did. . . . This is robbery. The second by commerce, which is generally cheating. The third by agriculture, the only honest way . . . wrought by the hand of God in his [favor], as a reward for his innocent life and his virtuous industry."[7] This perspective reflected both the prejudices of the English Country Whig ideology inherited by the founders, as well as prevailing views on political economy held by the French physiocrats and their adherents who believed overall wealth could be increased by unregulated agricultural labor. Their doctrine of *laissez faire* would enter American political thought indirectly by way of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, providing a convenient scholarly justification for Americans' belief in the moral primacy of agriculture.[8]

Americans of the 1780s identified industry and manufacturing with the urban squalor found in Great Britain and her neighbors. "Let them, with the Generality of the Common People of Scotland go Barefoot, then may they make large Exports in Shoes and Stockings," Franklin

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[6] Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," 85-86, in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson* Vol. IV, ed. Paul L. Ford (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904).
[7] Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*: *The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), 108.
[8] McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 98; Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789,* The Oxford History of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 51-52.

warned. “And if they will be content to wear Rags like the Spinners and Weavers of England, they may make Cloths and Stuffs for all Parts of the World.”[9] The impoverished slums that agrarian republicans associated with a manufacturing economy were not only unsightly, but a danger to democracy itself. It was assumed that economic dependence upon one’s betters bred political servility—hence the necessity of a property qualification for voting, lest the affairs of state be influenced by those “so situated as to have no wills of their own.”[10] Only two decades earlier no less than William Blackstone had affirmed the necessity of the property qualification, arguing that a general franchise would paradoxically “give a great, an artful, or a wealthy man, a larger share in elections than is consistent with general liberty.” A nation of freeholding agriculturists therefore portended better odds for continued political independence.[11]

In the eyes of agrarian idealists, America at her founding was ideally situated to become a farmer’s utopia. Thomas Paine proudly proclaimed in 1777 that “the people of America are a people of property; almost every man is a freeholder.” “Almost every” in this case did not include the black slaves who constituted 60% of the population of South Carolina, 40% of Virginia, or one-fifth of the country as a whole. Nor did it include the American Indians whose lands would be subject in subsequent generations to alienation to the white man by any means necessary. Yet, freeholding was sufficiently ubiquitous that as many as 80% of the free adult

[9] McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 108.
[10] Oscar Handlin, and Mary Handlin, eds. *The Popular Sources of Political Authority: Documents on the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966) excerpted at https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s12.html.
[11] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: A Facsimile of the First Edition of 1765—1769* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) excerpted at https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/a1_2_1s3.html.

male population in some colonies met the property qualification for voting at the time of the Revolution.[12]

Reciprocally, the rough economic equality of white males was seen as a social and moral good as well as a political one. Hereditary hierarchies with their titles, privileges, and patronage had given way in the early republic to an egalitarian notion of citizenship rooted in patriotism and public virtue. American prosperity was therefore a testimony to the validity of the republican ideal. Writing of the early 19th century concept of the American dream, Daniel Walker Howe observes that "Americans of [their] generation thought of their economic careers as making a moral and political statement on behalf of freedom."[13] Washington Irving boasted that "[a]ll the writers of England united … could not conceal our rapidly growing importance, and matchless prosperity. They could not conceal that these are owing, not merely to physical and local, but also to moral causes—to the political liberty, the general diffusion of knowledge, the prevalence of sound moral and religious principles…."[14] The question naturally arose: *Was agrarian virtue and economic success self-sustaining? What steps, if any, should civil government take to expand property ownership and improve farm outputs?*[15]

Jefferson himself proposed in 1776 that Virginia allot to each citizen 50 acres of land. Radicals in Pennsylvania even advocated land reform measures with "the power of lessening property when it became excessive in individuals."[16] However, those early Americans who most

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[12] Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 100; Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty*: *A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 509; McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 27.
[13] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought : The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44-45;
[14] Washington Irving, "The Sketch Book," in *The Works of Washington Irving* New Edition, Revised, Vol. II (New York: George P. Putnam, 1850), 69.
[15] Wood, *Empire of Liberty,* 6-8.
[16] Wood, *Empire of Liberty,* 8.

sincerely believed in the agrarian ideal believed in *laissez faire* in equal measure. Indirectly drawing on the physiocrats' materialist determinism, the southern agrarians believed that "extreme jealousy of [government] power and careful attention to its allocation" would be sufficient, along with the broad distribution of land, to guarantee both liberty and affluence in perpetuity.[17] By contrast, the New Englanders' puritan republicanism fixated on public morality as the source of public virtue. The philosophical breach between these two factions was the seed of the enduring dichotomy between Americans who adopted a negative conception of liberty (freedom *from* unnecessary constraints on the individual) and those who sought positive liberties (freedom *to* greater self-actualization or public service). That theoretical dispute went hand-in-hand with the very concrete debate over economic visions. Jefferson and his allies quickly squared off against Alexander Hamilton's plan for a monetized public debt and a diversified economy based on manufacturing and commerce *alongside* agriculture.[18]

The gap between the two coalitions initially narrowed: Hamilton's banking plan succeeded, and farmers themselves embraced light manufacturing for supplemental income as Hamilton expected they would. Jefferson loyalist Albert Gallatin commented, "You will scarcely find a farmer who is not, in some degree, a trader."[19] By 1816 Jefferson himself would affirm "We must now place the manufacturer by the side of the agriculturalist."[20] As the first party system gave way to the Era of Good Feelings, the Democratic-Republican Party even came around to endorse the Second Bank of the United States, buoyed by agrarian need for credit.

[17] McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum,* 75.
[18] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 145, 211; McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 70-76, 115, 141.
[19] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 705.
[20] Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 705.

Those who settled west of the Appalachians also came to support Hamiltonian internal transportation improvements, to better speed their crops to national or overseas markets.[21]

With the emergence of the second party system, the centrality of agriculture to America's future once again became the subject of partisan debate. Andrew Jackson's Democrats sought to expand an agrarian empire across the continent, promoting economic uniformity within a morally agnostic cultural context that allowed southern chattel slavery to persist alongside the free labor north. By contrast, the Whigs championed a mixed economy and evangelical moral code. For farmers themselves, the choices between subsistence farming and farming for markets—with or without additional income from "put out" manufacturing work—or whether to move westward were less about ideology than economic reality. Americans made virtue out of necessity. For smaller operators struggling with depleted soil health, joining the westward migration was a more realistic option than letting a field lay fallow in the east. In their new homes, farmers sold to markets when and where they could access them or grew for their own consumption when they could not. Of those unable to move west or revitalize their land in the east, some resorted to tenancy. The land sold both by western pioneers and destitute small-scale freeholders could then be purchased by better endowed landowners who in turn profited as landlords. While the US government did not systematically collect data on tenancy rates until the 1880 census (when tenant farmers represented 25% of the total), a 1988 study found a 16% tenancy rate across the Free Labor north in the period 1859-1860. Political disputes during the first half of the 19th century demonstrate that tenancy was already sufficiently widespread to become a partisan political issue by the 1830s.[22]

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[21] McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 141; Wood, *Empire of Liberty*, 44, 83-85, 211.
[22] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought,* 42, 582-584; Jeremy Atack, "Tenants and Yeomen in the Nineteenth Century," *Agricultural History* 62, no. 3 (1988): 6-32, accessed October 4, 2020, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3743206.

As unfree labor disappeared from the Mid-Atlantic states, large landowners turned to tenant farmers to replace the slaves and indentured servants they had formerly employed. One of the wealthiest of these landlords, Stephen Van Rensselaer III, was fated to die as the economic Panic of 1839 was shrinking farm revenues across the country. His heirs then attempted to honor the terms of his will by collecting $400,000 ($9.7 million in 2019 dollars) in deferred rents from his tenants to settle his debts. The response was agrarian unrest: a rent strike and demands from the tenants to be afforded the opportunity to purchase the land they worked. New York's Whig governor (and future Republican secretary of state) William H. Seward issued a bold proposal to buy out recalcitrant landlords with eminent domain, and sell the land to former tenants who would then have collateral to borrow the capital needed to switch from unprofitable wheat or wool to dairy farming. Both the Seward plan and a subsequent alternative from Democratic Governor Silas Wright came to nothing, but the failure of these proposals and the anti-rent protests lent weight to the growing movement for a national homestead act. Trade unionist George Henry Evans advanced that cause through his National Reform Association and friendly relationship with Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*. Under the slogan, "Vote Yourself a Farm," Evans called for awarding 160-acre homesteads from federal lands to any enterprising adult settler. Evans' homestead idea quickly became part of the platform of the short-lived Free Soil Party in the aftermath of the US-Mexican War. By 1854 there was sufficient support that a northern-dominated majority of the House of Representatives passed a version of it, only to see it killed by southern senators shortly after the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Those two outcomes helped propel the partisan realignment that destroyed the Whig Party and united the

Free Soilers and northern Whigs into a broad front anti-slavery coalition known as the Republican Party.[23]

Alabama state representative Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry had said of the homestead proposal that it "would prove a most efficient ally for Abolition by encouraging . . . the settlement of free farms with Yankees and foreigners," and the newly energized opponents of the "slave power" agreed.[24] In 1858 the new Republicans again passed a homestead act in the House, which was again blocked by southern Democrats. The Republicans made Democratic opposition to a homestead act and a transcontinental railroad a key issue in the 1858-59 midterm elections, helping them win the largest share of seats in the House of Representatives for the first time. Now, in a lame duck session of the outgoing 35th Congress, the Republicans won enough support from northern Democrats muster the votes of half the Senate behind their homestead bill, but could not overcome Vice-President John C. Breckinridge's tie-breaking vote. In the 36th Congress, the new House plurality again threw its weight behind a homestead act, a land-grant college measure, and a Pacific railroad. Southern opposition thwarted anew the railroad bill and the agricultural and mechanical colleges, but homestead advocates succeeded at last in getting their proposal past the Senate and onto the president's desk. President James Buchanan rewarded his southern supporters with a veto, which could not be overridden.[25]

The Lincoln-Hamlin Republican ticket of 1860 ran on a platform echoing the Federalist/Whig passion for internal improvements, including river and harbor improvements, the transcontinental railroad, and once again, a homestead act. In the balloting that autumn,

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[23] Howe, *What Hath God Wrought,* 540-541, 552-555; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era,* The Oxford History of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 125-126.
[24] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 126.
[25] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, 188-189, 193-194, 450-452.

Republican pluralities were elected in both chambers that would later become majorities upon southern secession. The Republicans wasted little time in enacting their signature legislative initiatives. On May 15, 1862 they passed "An Act to Establish a Department of Agriculture," albeit one that would not achieve cabinet rank until the 1880s. The Homestead Act passed May 20, affording 160 acres of public land to any adult settler who, after five years, could "prove" their claim by making improvements. On July 1, the Pacific Railroad Act was signed granting land and providing for loans to incentivize and fund the construction of a railroad from Omaha to San Francisco. Finally, one day later, Representative Justin Morrill's bill to grant federal lands to the states for funding agricultural and mechanical colleges also passed, enabling the establishment of keystone higher education institutions in rural states and laying the groundwork for later agricultural experiment stations and cooperative extension.[26]

The Republicans' coalitional cohesion would soon begin to give way, as the Union victory and the ratification of the 13th Amendment deprived them of the *raison d'être* that had initially united former Whigs, Free Soilers, and Free Soil Democrats. Some held to the old Whig faith in interventionism, now wielded in pursuit of a Greater Reconstruction that would reshape the country in the image of Lincoln's Free Labor Illinois. Workers in cities and towns would find social mobility in a manufacturing sector not yet totally divorced from its antecedents in the apprenticeship system that had shaped the lives of artisans and mechanics at the founding. In the country, the Homestead Act of 1862 and the seemingly unlimited supply of land in the west would offer the age-old dream of independence and autonomy to all comers. Radicals like Thaddeus Stevens were prepared to extend that promise to the former slaves via the redistribution of lands seized from the vanquished cotton oligarchy. In the words of a Louisiana

[26] McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom,* 220-221, 232-233.

Radical newspaper, "There is . . . no true republican government, unless the land and wealth in general, are distributed among the great mass of the inhabitants . . . no more room in our society for an oligarchy of slaveholders or property holders."[27] However, Whiggish Republicans would have to contend not only with an accidental Democratic president—Lincoln's second Vice President, Andrew Johnson—but liberal Republicans as well. Liberals such as Carl Schurz, Charles Sumner, and Horace Greeley represented a heterodox coalition opposed to the reelection of Johnson's successor, Ulysses S. Grant, and supportive of *laissez faire* and emerging industrial capitalism.[28]

The center could not hold. Dreams of land redistribution to Freedmen were dashed by the reality of vagrancy laws and the new sharecropping economy that emerged even before the formal end of Reconstruction. Eventual independent production as a viable economic destiny for a large share of urban wage laborers turned out to be a fantasy, as did the idea that rain would follow the plow to neat 160-acre homesteads in the arid lands west of the 100th meridian. Economic prosperity, *laissez faire*, and contract freedom failed to unite the disparate interests of the Gilded Age Republicans. The so-called Bourbon Democrats who dominated the Party of Jefferson continued to articulate the classical liberal message, now in support of railroad and banking interests the Jeffersonians would hardly have recognized. In this new environment, demand for reform came largely from below, rather than from the elites of the established parties. Support for bimetallism, antimonopolism, and railroad regulation emerged from grassroots organizations like the National Grange and the Farmers Alliance. Such "producerist" groups set the agenda for the Greenback Party, which elected several members of Congress in

[27] Richard White, *The Republic for Which it Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* The Oxford History of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 44.
[28] White, *The Republic for Which it Stands,* 1-3.

the 1880s despite failing to gain traction in successive presidential elections. Former Greenbackers then formed an alliance with labor leaders to form the People's Party, commonly known as the Populists. Populists showed strength in the west—they would win four states and receive electoral votes from two others in the 1892 election—but could not lay claim to the gap left by the collapse of an existing major party as the Republicans had in the 1850s. Their issues would be coopted by the Democrats following the 1896 nomination of William Jennings Bryan.[29]

The contradictions between *laissez faire* and equality of opportunity that marked the early 19th century remained at its end. With the passing of the Populist moment, the stage now turned to reformist forces in the middle and upper economic strata, in both of the major parties, who had previously advocated for political and social reforms such as Civil Service reform and temperance. These Progressives were terrified of the radical class consciousness exemplified by groups like the Farmers Alliance and the Knights of Labor, and sought a solution in structural reforms that Shelton Stromquist has termed "a politics of amelioration." Invoking the bourgeois dogma of a harmony of interests between the classes that had characterized the Whig worldview, Progressives aimed to heal society's divisions through modern technocratic social policy and eliminating the influence of parochial "interests" upon government. Once liberated from pursuing the narrow agendas of the special interests, government could work more effectively for the undifferentiated "people." In Progressivism, the answer to the social disruption wrought by corporatism, the closing of the frontier, and cyclical "Hard Times" was the remaking of society according to middle class norms.[30]

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[29] For detailed analysis of these events, see White, *The Republic for Which it Stands*, 213-216, 362-363, 384, 425-426, 612-614, 746-756, 836-844.

[30] Shelton Stromquist, *Reinventing "The People" The Progressive Movement, the Class Problem, and the Origins of Modern Liberalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), *viii*, 3-6; Howe, *What Hath*

Would the Progressive solution be enough? The coming years would test their convictions. In 1900, as Theodore Roosevelt was replacing the late Garret Hobart as running mate on the ticket of William McKinley, the rate of farm tenancy was 35.3%—approximately 10% higher than it had been twenty years earlier, and 19% higher than it had been prior to the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862. If Jefferson had declared independence on behalf of an agrarian utopia, the 20th century would test "whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."[31]

Literature Review

Many works have examined aspects of American agricultural policy over the years, and though the populist revolt of the nineteenth century is somewhat outside the scope of the study at hand, Lawrence Goodwyn's analysis of the farmer's position during that period remains instructive and provides critical context for the emerging pressures on the farmer's world. Goodwyn explains his story as "the decline of freedom in America" and views the Populist crusade as the last gasp of the truly democratic reform movements before the triumph of their enemies: progressivism and national conformity to the strictures of capitalism. Goodwyn recognizes the massive impact of the laws and cultural pressures that would eventually remake American agriculture into something almost unrecognizable. By his analysis, the Populists created a shining moment of democratic transcendence, what he called "Democratic Promise" on a scale never seen again in American history.[32]

God Wrought, 544; Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), xiv-xv.

[31] Howard A. Turner, "Farm Tenancy and Distribution Trends in the United States," *Law and Contemporary Problems* (1937) (https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1874&context=lcp).

[32] Lawrence Goodwyn*, Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 542.

As the foundation of the movement, Goodwyn cites the hardships of impoverished southerners laboring under the crop lien system. This demeaning way of life, created by the abuses of the furnishing merchants, propelled poor tenants to seek new lands initially and, when that failed, to advocate for reform. They found their place in the emerging alliance system. The Texas-based Farmers Alliance provided the platform these farmers needed to launch the ultimate agrarian revolt. According to Goodwyn, traveling lecturers and – to a much greater extent – the cooperative experiment shaped their understanding of their own power to advocate for change and their ability to bring about appreciable elevations in the lifestyle and bargaining power of American farmers.

In some ways, Earl Hayter's *Troubled Farmer* laid a foundation for Goodwyn's study by fostering recognition of the daily challenges met by those in agriculture throughout the nineteenth century. Hayter's work reveals a way of life beset by hardship and humbug. He emphasizes farmers' refusal to learn from professionals in agricultural colleges and their inability to sniff out swindlers as contributors to the ills they suffered. Hayter certainly faulted the perpetrators of these schemes and insisted that constant swindling had a major psychological impact on the rural mind. On the other hand, he notes that recalcitrant farmers could have protected themselves from some of these situations had they been willing to embrace the agricultural colleges and other resources sooner. Clearly, the perspectives on intervention had not yet reached consensus.[33]

Goodwyn focuses heavily on the cooperative movement as a catalyst for broader populist reform efforts, suggesting that, while the cooperative idea recruited participants, its obstacles and ultimate failures radicalized them to action. Their proposed subtreasury system provided for the

[33] Earl Hayter, *The Troubled Farmer, 1850-1900: Rural Adjustment to Industrialism* (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1968), 182, 208.

age-old problem of falling crop prices at harvest time and freed the farmer from the clutches of the dreaded furnishing merchant. It also marked the first time that a sweeping proposal for direct government intervention in agriculture gained such notoriety. Some scholars note earlier requests for intervention in agriculture: Gilbert Fite documents Nebraska settlers seeking military aid during the Grant administration, and William Cronon details the fight for legislative remedy to the perils of grain grading in Chicago, but the Subtreasury Plan would have represented a new level of federal supervision and engagement.[34] Reformers used the appeal of the subtreasury idea and the discontent among southern and western farmers to craft the People's Party. When the movement collapsed, Goodwyn explains "the last heretics…" were brought under the "dogmas of progress."[35] These "dogmas of progress" are the subject of the present work.

Often, studies of US agricultural policy restrict themselves to a single farm bill, agriculture secretary, or legislative initiative. This is particularly evident among analyses of the parity battles in New Deal era legislation which, while highly informative, can obscure larger trends. Some of the earliest examinations of the Agricultural Adjustment Act—such as the 1940 work by activist Anna Rochester, titled *Why Farmers are Poor*—contained sharply polemical charges. In her book, Rochester strongly rebukes the AAA for failing to address the needs of small subsistence farmers and claims that the majority of relief funding went inappropriately to large commercial operations. Rochester wished to restructure the aid programs in order to correct for this perceived injustice by ending blanket subsidies and connecting loans to demonstrated need. Her work, clearly designed to pursue political change, offered an early glimpse into the

[34] Gilbert Fite, *The Farmers' Frontier, 1865-1900* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 69; William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 141.
[35] Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise,* 553.

divisive nature of New Deal interpretations that continued with varying degrees of severity through many of the subsequent studies.[36]

Dean Albertson's *Roosevelt's Farmer* (1961) chronicles the progression of Claude R. Wickard from his local administrative role in the AAA to his ultimate position as Secretary of Agriculture. Here, Albertson argues that Wickard's occasional ineptness and "down home" personality made him the perfect selection for Agricultural Adjustment Administrator and later Cabinet Secretary, because such personality traits increased his appeal to local farmers and invited their trust and cooperation with the controversial legislation. Albertson's most unique and informative source material came from Claude R. Wickard's personal diary and letter collection. These manuscripts powerfully inform the work with a glimpse into the farm leader's mind at every major turn throughout the operation of the AAA.[37]

Likewise, Gilbert Fite's examination of George N. Peek in 1954 takes a biographical approach to the subject. In his examination of the fight for parity by way of its most visible advocate, Fite illuminates what he believes to be a central struggle from the battle over the McNary-Haugen bill in the 1920s into the New Deal. He calls it the fight between the industrial East and the agricultural West. Unbeknownst to the McNary-Haugen supporters, Fite argues, agriculture "already had become subordinate to industry."[38] The farmer's unwillingness to accept this position of subservience—firmly grounded in his commitment to the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal—underlies the rest of Fite's analysis of the ultimately unsuccessful parity endeavor.

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[36] Anna Rochester, *Why Farmers are Poor* (New York: International Publishers Co., 1940), 264.
[37] Dean Albertson, *Roosevelt's Farmer: Claude R. Wickard in the New Deal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 117, 128.
[38] Gilbert Fite, *George N. Peek and the Fight for Farm Parity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 123.

Christiana Campbell's 1961 work, *The Farm Bureau and the New Deal,* provides insight into the highly influential Farm Bureau organization throughout the course of the New Deal farm programs, arguing that it proved uniquely successful at bridging the divide between commodity and region. Only when the administration ceased to consult the Farm Bureau as advisors and friends, she reveals, did the bureau's once-enthusiastic support for the AAA begin to wane. Several years later, Robert Snyder's 1984 monograph *Cotton Crisis* marks the beginning of renewed academic interest in New Deal era farm policy. One of the most valuable contributions of Snyder's work on cotton is his incredible mining of local newspaper archives to paint a clear picture of public opinion about the hardships faced by the affected growers. His notes include selections from the *Houston Chronicle* to the *Wall Street Journal* and provide much-needed farmer perspective not often found in sources like the Congressional Record.[39]

R. Douglas Hurt's numerous contributions to the field of agricultural history range from broad overviews to narrowly tailored analyses of issues in American farming. His 1981 study *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* approaches early twentieth century US agriculture policy from the minds of Dust Bowl land owners and tenant farmers. He argues that landowning farmers in the most heavily affected region welcomed the opportunity to earn additional money under the original AAA. Expanding on this earlier study with a far narrower focus, Hurt's 2000 article, "Prices, Payments and Production: Kansas Wheat Farmers and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration," analyzes the bridge between Midwestern corn farmers and southern cotton farmers. Hurt's later monograph, *Problems of Plenty* (2002), expands his investigation to look more broadly at agricultural policy over time, as a manifestation of the interests of American farmers. Hurt argues that large-scale overproduction forced these farmers

[39] Christiana Campbell, *The Farm Bureau and the New Deal* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1962), 181; Robert E. Snyder, *Cotton Crisis* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 14.

into a position of great need and encouraged their compliance with the AAA program and subsequent interventions. This idea would be significantly developed and elaborated in the later works of Bill Winders and Jonathan Coppess, discussed below.[40]

Hurt's *Problems of Plenty* reignited interest in examining American farm policy over time, and both it and the subsequent works of others provide opportunities for comparative analysis and trajectory identification. Shortly thereafter, Paul K. Conkin's *Revolution Down on the Farm* covers seismic changes in American agriculture from 1929 to the present. Though not a study of policy per se, Conkin provides a bird's-eye view of the farm context in which such decisions were being made. Conkin examines the dramatic changes in farm practices particularly in the aftermath of World War II. These allowed Americans to spend an increasingly smaller portion of their income on food, even as farmers were pushed into other lines of work, while efficiency and consolidation climbed.[41]

Over time, some scholars have established components of what I identify as the larger policy trajectory. Their topical studies contribute significant research and insight to the field and they help us to see the continuity of trends across the period in question. Reo Christenson's *The Brannan Plan* proves particularly relevant for my own work. It chronicles the controversial "income support" proposal of Agriculture Secretary Charles F. Brannan in the Truman Administration, demonstrating the secretary's belief that positively shaping the farm economy

[40] R. Douglas Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1981), 93; R. Douglas Hurt, "Prices, Payments and Production: Kansas Wheat Farmers and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, 1933-1939," *Kansas History* 23 (2000): 72-87; R. Douglas Hurt, *Problems of Plenty: The American Farmer in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), 97.
[41] Paul K. Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture Since 1929* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 123.

could stabilize the larger economic picture. Christenson lays its failure at the feet of farmers themselves, in the forms of the Farm Bureau, the Grange, and the strong livestock interests.[42]

Similar in scope, Susan Levine's *School Lunch Politics,* provides a thorough history of the school lunch program in the United States from its inception in the age of Progressive reform through the twenty-first century. She explains the origin of the program as a modernizing effort on the part of early home economists and nutritionists combined with the efforts of agriculture policy makers and agricultural economists. Levine argues that this program existed to serve multiple purposes, with President Truman remarking that the school lunch program "contributed immeasurably" to both children and farmers once fully established.[43]

Among its other aims, school lunch also gained support as a kind of defense spending, according to Levine. With so many enlistees turned away during WWI for nutrition deficiencies such as rickets or poor teeth, those concerned with military manning strongly favored a system that could help ready young Americans for military service. Levine also pointed to school lunches as a way to unify national tastes and reform unsavory immigrant diets. By introducing students to American foods—heavy use of white sauces, for example—reformers hoped not only to melt young immigrants into the national pot, but also to influence their parents as well. As Levine makes clear, the combined influences of institutional meals and military service fostered the establishment of national identity and unification through food.[44] My work builds on Levine's argument, locating this emphasis on identity far beyond the walls of the school lunchroom and situating the students as dutiful consumers of American agricultural produce.

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[42] Rio Christenson, *The Brannan Plan: Farm Politics and Policy* (Ann Arbor: Michigan, 1959), 145.
[43] Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: the Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 5, 93.
[44] Levine, *School Lunch Politics,* 26, 67-8.

Other scholars shifted this lens to the international community. Amanda McVety's *Enlightened Aid* examines the effects of Truman's "Point Four" aid policy. She argued that Truman hoped to make the world a better place by sharing scientific advances and industrial progress in underdeveloped areas—believing that progress could occur as a kind of transformative process, helping the recipients take on a decidedly American tint as they embraced it. Truman did not give this aid without clear aims, and he commented specifically that Point Four aid served "to develop their resources . . . in national interests of the United States."[45] Such aid was understood as a means of spreading democracy and encouraging Americanization through training in agriculture. To help secure this goal, the US established an agricultural college in Ethiopia partnered with Oklahoma A&M in 1952. A related public administration project helped to rework institutions of Ethiopian government and to encourage collaboration with US representatives. McVety's Ethiopia case study of attempts to Americanize foreign agriculture provides instruction and framework for my own analysis of related efforts in US territories, particularly my examination of Guamanian agriculture in chapter six.[46]

Taking a similar approach in her 2009 book, *Transplanting the Great Society,* Kristen Ahlberg argues that Lyndon Johnson transformed the "Food for Peace" program into a diplomatic endeavor, aimed at fostering better international relations and inculcating American values abroad. Specifically, she reexamines the transition of Public Law 480 as both domestic agriculture policy and foreign aid program. Under Eisenhower, this program mostly served to eliminate agricultural surplus by delivering it to nations in need. While it helped to raise goodwill, some viewed this as a dumping practice, occasionally injurious to world markets. John

[45] Amanda Kay McVety, *Enlightened Aid: U.S. Development as Foreign Aid Policy in Ethiopia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 113.
[46] McVety, *Enlightened Aid,* 115, 127, 131.

F. Kennedy began transforming P.L. 480 into a humanitarian effort, and Johnson took that process a step further, bringing the program under the control of the State Department to be used for diplomatic ends. According to Ahlberg, Johnson believed this distribution of American largess could demonstrate the benefits of the American system to the world.[47]

Though these important studies shed light on the vast assortment of agriculture-related policies in the twentieth century, they stop short of illuminating an overarching theme. Other scholars have worked to provide a more wholistic picture of US agricultural policy, and several of these key contributions are discussed at length here. In the early 1950s, Murray Benedict undertook to write a complete history of farm policy in America. His work begins with a brief survey of pre-twentieth century efforts, then focuses in detail on the period from 1914 to 1950. Situated firmly within his contemporaneous historical context, Benedict writes to shape policy in the years that would follow, years many assumed would bring crisis in overpopulation and food shortages. This probability, he argues, would upend agricultural policy in the second half of the twentieth century when surplus became little more than a foggy memory. Benedict's narrative history serves mainly to chronicle the shifts in legislative efforts and in farmer attitudes that stretched across this 150-year period. Reviewers at the time of publication celebrated the heft of the volume and lauded its value as a reference, but noted that it did not aim to capture the "problem" of agriculture or provide data that might promote deeper analysis. Benedict writes of the lasting impact of early US land policy, of the reach of the USDA, and of farmers beginning the transition to big-business practices. Benedict provides the starting point for so many students of farm policy who came after him. It is particularly interesting, then, to note that the scholars–often political scientists, agricultural economists, and sociologists–who built on his work also

[47] Kristin L. Ahlberg, *Transplanting the Great Society: Lyndon Johnson and Food for Peace* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009), 1, 23, 42.

significantly curtailed its intended scope. In the near seventy years since Benedict wrote, none has examined the topic with an approach so comprehensive. Subsequent studies, while offering important perspective on specific issues, continue to obscure the bigger picture and exclude relevant materials outside the context of the farm bill(s) or specific legislative initiative they take as their subject matter.[48]

Political scientist John Mark Hansen's 1991 monograph, *Gaining Access,* illustrates the point well. Hansen writes to examine the degree of political influence or "access" wielded by farm interests between 1919 and 1981. He divides this period into three phases, the first with agriculture having little influence throughout the 1920s, the second with agriculture ascendant in the thirties and forties, and the third with agriculture in decline. His thesis posits a utilitarian exchange between legislators gauging constituent sentiment on the one hand, and a united farm lobby on the other. In the post-war period, when cracks emerged in this consensus, Hansen naturally found a decline in farm influence as the agricultural voting bloc lost power.[49]

Building on these works, Bill Winders tackles farm legislation through a sociological lens in his 2009 book *The Politics of Food Supply.* Winders uses Karl Polanyi's "double movement" illustration to explain the policy trajectories of intervention and retrenchment based on intra-class conflict and regional commodity differences in the global marketplace. He describes the core of twentieth-century US agricultural policy as "support [for] farm income by raising prices for agricultural commodities through supply management to control surpluses."[50] He cautions against the "Farm Bloc" interpretation—in which historians portray farmers and farm legislators

[48] Murray Benedict, *Farm Policies of the United States, 1790-1950: A Study of their Origins and Development* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1953); Clarence Danhof, "Review" *Journal of Economic History* 15, no. 1 (March 1955): 83-85.
[49] John Mark Hansen, *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby 1919-1981* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 7.
[50] Bill Winders, *The Politics of Food Supply* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 9.

as a cohesive group—and instead advocates for greater attention to the conflicts within agriculture. In this way, Winders's work represents a departure from Hansen who shows a tendency to consider the "farm lobby" as a whole even as he notes policy disagreements by commodity.

Drawing heavily on the studies of Benedict, Hansen, and Winders, Jonathan Coppess, in 2018, published his *Fault Lines of Farm Policy*, which aims to trace the significant fracture points in the coalitions that shaped US Farm Bills throughout American history. In it, he argues that the volatility of crop prices and the regional divisions of the crop map demarcate these political divisions. Coppess suggests that the failure of 1920s policymakers to address the "farm problem"—characterized by production that far surpassed demand and the fragmented nature of farming that prevented a concerted response to glut—resulted in the desperation and crisis of the 1930s. This, he claimed, brought on a fundamental change in the relationship between US farmers and their government in the New Deal era. [51]

Coppess goes on to argue that farm interests' failure to enact beneficial policy in the 1920s prompted their organization and unification, and this cooperative approach to subsequent farm policy defined the outcomes going forward. Coppess relies on a host of important historians and agricultural economists in his writing, in addition to extensive use of the Congressional Record and documentation from USDA. However, his reliance on committee proceedings simultaneously reflects his own experiences in Congress and the USDA and limits his treatment of external factors. He rarely considers the influence of the House and Senate at large until

[51] Jonathan Coppess, *The Fault Lines of Farm Policy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018), 10.

arriving at the question of the Food Stamp program, and his treatment of presidential intervention minimizes executive involvement until the Eisenhower vetoes.[52]

Coppess crafts a detailed chronicle of the farm bills, and his work contributes significantly to our understanding of this legislation, but it leaves open larger questions of context. In my master's thesis, *Politics and Production Control,* I established much the same interpretive framework as the authors above: examining the development of farm policy in service to farmer constituent interests, fractured then cobbled together along the lines of class and crop map. However, subsequent research has led me to reevaluate this position.

In order to truly understand the impact of policy on agriculture and rural communities, we must first decide what policies to include. Coppess limited his study to the 14 "farm bills" beginning with the 1933 Agricultural Adjustment Act. This approach built on the earlier analysis of Bill Winders, and others discussed above. I argue that this approach excludes the critical ways policymakers strove to reshape rural and agricultural life in America beginning even before the farm bills came into existence. Historians who examine "commodity policy" as the whole of US agricultural policy are missing the key. Far beyond adjusting commodity supply and consumer pricing, US agricultural policy in the twentieth century exerted significant influence over the lives and experiences of rural Americans. These policies aimed to fundamentally remake American farm life and to craft a uniquely American farmer identity that better fit Jeffersonian ideal, and to put that identity to use in service to the nation. Such policies served many masters, but nonetheless attempted to align agriculture with a progressive template that exemplified and engrained a larger "American" identity—one anchored in democratization, growth, and efficiency in both farm communities and among the American people more broadly.

[52] Coppess, *The Fault Lines of Farm Policy*, 16.

From the foundational efforts of the Country Life Movement and Cooperative Extension through Eisenhower's plan for "Agriculture's Human Resources," stretching all the way to Johnson's exportation of his Great Society ideals, the trajectory is clear. While individual farm bills may reflect the preferences and even parochial interests of assorted farm lobby groups, American agricultural policy as a whole emerged not from entrenched, regional farm lobby efforts, but from the broader crises of liberalism and national unity that farmers recognized only dimly. It is this larger and more intricate policy tapestry I will illuminate in the coming chapters.

Chapter Two will examine agricultural policy within the context of Progressivism and Preparedness. It will expound the historical antecedents of these policies, including examples like the Country Life initiative and Cooperative Extension among other efforts at agricultural modernization and intervention. It will then break down the debate, passage, and implementation of the Food and Fuel Control Act—which brought US wartime agriculture under the control of the US Food Administration (USFA)—and reveal the ways that this program made use of existing structures of rural and agricultural intervention to extract a deeper transformation. Such an examination demonstrates the motivations and reservations of the policymakers involved and establishes the degree to which national emergency served as a mechanism for the passage of the kinds of policies foreshadowed by the efforts of the Country Life progressives. It reveals their greater aims of military dominance and nation-building through regulation and propaganda in the agricultural sector. This chapter also examines the degree to which these efforts were successful among ordinary dirt farmers who were often found taking enforcement of the USFA rules into their own hands.

Chapter Three, "The Struggle with Surplus," assesses the implications of policymaking efforts in a time of agricultural overabundance. This question encompasses a great deal of input

and conflicting interest, from the farmers' fight for parity through the AAA in the 1930s. It provides additional support for the argument that farm policy of this era demonstrated less interest in serving the wishes of the individual farmer than in directed economic development, formulation of national identity, and maintenance of social cohesion. It further reveals the role of emergency in agricultural policy by examining conflict in the 1920s, capped by the failure of McNary-Haugen, and followed by the radical intervention of the 1930s. This chapter also includes an analysis of the Agricultural Adjustment Act as a tool of anti-radicalism, and USDA's direct dissemination of Jeffersonian agrarian propaganda through its Democratic Philosophy Schools.

Chapters Four and Five revisit agricultural policy in the service of international conflict, first in World War II and then throughout the Cold War. Chapter Four details the renewed mobilization of agriculture in military service to the nation. It demonstrates the challenges faced by leaders and policymakers in their effort to shift from the mindset of production control to the responsibility of global breadbasket and continues to explore the extent to which agricultural policy failed to consider—or disputed the importance of—individual farmers with an examination of the debate over the Farm Security Administration. Also included is a study of the propaganda and incentives used to grow the agriculture sector in a time of great labor shortage, and the large-scale efforts in national nutrition as a tool of military preparedness and future economic growth. Chapter Five assesses the degree to which policymakers continued to pursue the same objectives as questions of national identity and democratization became even more important during the Cold War. In this same vein, it highlights the ways agricultural policy served the containment effort of the Cold War era and promoted democratization worldwide when used as a tool of US foreign policy.

Chapter Six brings these questions home to illuminate domestic policy, from the formalization of the Food Stamp Program to Rural Areas Development. These important initiatives—often minimized or ignored by historians of agricultural policy—continued to shape American national identity domestically through the implementation of progressively styled agricultural policy, even as that term took on new meaning in the world of the New Frontier and the Great Society.

Chapter Seven offers concluding thoughts on the outcomes and legacy of over 50 years of agricultural policy pursued similarly in times of calm and of crisis. It reiterates the findings that US agricultural policymakers consistently pursued the development of a true "agricultural policy" that promoted national identity, economic growth, military strength, and social cohesion through mechanisms often ancillary to the farm bills, in ways we simply cannot ignore.

CHAPTER 2: PROGRESSIVES AND PREPAREDNESS

By the turn of the twentieth century, the number of Americans employed in agriculture dipped below forty percent of the total workforce and rural outmigration to urban centers raised concern among leaders committed to the democratizing role of agriculture in the republic. Such a seismic shift, they believed, demanded proactive intervention. This chapter illuminates their response to rapidly changing national conditions. It demonstrates the rise of a comprehensive Progressive agriculture policy by examining the Country Life Commission together with cooperative extension, federal farm loans, and vocational-agricultural education, then situates the US Food Administration as an outgrowth of these endeavors.

To fully understand the rural and agricultural policies that arose with vigor during the Progressive era, one must first recognize the earlier efforts that provided a platform upon which subsequent programs could emerge. Designs for a national agricultural board stretch all the way back to the founding of the United States, with the first president calling on Congress to implement exactly such an undertaking. On December 7, 1796, George Washington delivered his eighth annual State of the Union address in what would be his final public appearance. In it, he proposed the establishment of a national board of agriculture, much like the British Board of Agriculture founded three years earlier. This, he argued, would serve the good of the entire nation.

> It will not be doubted, that with reference either to individual, or National Welfare, Agriculture is of primary importance. In proportion as Nations advance in population, and other circumstances of maturity, this truth becomes more apparent; and renders the cultivation of the Soil more and more, an object of public patronage. Institutions for promoting it, grow up, supported by the public purse: and to what object can it be dedicated with greater propriety? . . . This species of establishment contributes doubly to the increase of improvement; by stimulating to enterprise and experiment, and by drawing to a common centre, the results everywhere of individual skill and observation; and spreading them thence

> over the whole Nation. Experience accordingly has shewn, that they are very cheap Instruments, of immense National benefits.[1]

Congress immediately took up the question but failed to enact the program as requested. For many years, debate persisted over whether such an organization properly fit within this new model of government. Meanwhile, officials in the Patent Office and later the Department of the Interior filled the gap by providing agricultural statistics and distributing seeds of varying value. Then, after decades of debate and a presidential veto, the United States finally established a significant governmental framework for agricultural research and support in 1862 with the creation of the US Department of Agriculture, the Land Grant College system, and the Homestead Act. These programs aimed to fulfill a number of goals, some economic, political, or educational, but each pursued a uniquely American identity, encircled by the ongoing crisis of Civil War.

In a speech on June 6, 1862, Justin Morrill expounded upon the urgency of these endeavors, widely supported by members of Congress and then President Lincoln. Morrill insisted that federal efforts in support of US agriculture served ends far greater than mere crop produce; they nursed and nurtured the very foundations of patriotism and democracy Americans held so dear.

> Should no effort be made to arrest the deterioration and spoilation of the soil in America, while all Europe is wisely striving to teach her agriculturists the best means of hoarding up capital in the lands on that side of the Atlantic, it is easy to see that we are doomed to be dwarfed in national importance, and not many years can pass away before our ships will be laden with grain not on their outward but homeward voyage. Then with cheap bread no longer peculiar to America, our free institutions may be thought too dear by those of whom even empires are not

[1] George Washington, *State of the Union address,* December 7, 1796, University of Virginia Miller Center https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-7-1796-eighth-annual-message-congress (accessed January 5, 2020); also referenced in part in Gladys Baker, *Century of Service. The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1963).

> worthy – the men with hearts, hands, and brains – vainly looking to our shores for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.[2]

Morrill made clear that the end goal of the Land Grant colleges included more than mere economic and agricultural prosperity. They represented the great hope of democracy, the groundwork upon which to attract new settlers, and the means to secure global importance. He also argued that such institutions provided for the democratization of education at a time when precious few could receive appointment to US military academies and private options were often cost prohibitive. The need for accessible education across the country with a practical focus on agriculture rang throughout congressional discussion and debate. "There is no appeal that comes so resistlessly to our sympathy" Morrill said, "as that of a bright-eyed boy, without means but strong in virtues and noble aspirations, seeking the temporary aid that will enable him to achieve a liberal education. Let the corner stones of these land colleges be laid, and this army of lads, who are so soon to take charge of the institutions of our country, will with all the enthusiasm of faith and hope 'thank God and take courage.'"[3]

When Theodore Roosevelt appointed his Commission on Country Life in 1908, those "bright-eyed boys" had enjoyed the benefits of Morrill's education program for almost fifty years, while the percentage of Americans employed in agriculture dropped by nearly half during the same period. Roosevelt called the commission precisely because of declining farm populations, but he recognized that inducing a "back to the land" movement would require significant improvements across the entire rural life experience. The commission thus undertook a holistic examination of rural life for the purpose of designing a cohesive policy approach to challenges facing farm communities. In the eyes of the reformers, rural life continually failed to

[2] Justin Morrill, *Agricultural Colleges,* June 6, 1862, *Congressional Globe,* 37nd Cong., 2nd sess., H 258.
[3] Morrill, *Agricultural Colleges*, 256.

progress with sufficient speed. Although in 1909—the same year the commission reported its findings—farmers embarked on that cherished period of high profits later known as "parity," to Progressives, agriculture in the United States lacked a critical component. It was no longer "a civilization in full harmony with the best American ideals."[4]

To secure that aim, supporters relied upon Morrill's Land Grant colleges and the USDA to provide the essential framework for their rural and agricultural policy efforts. Their subsequent success with cooperative extension and home demonstration took on greater importance as the United States entered the tumultuous years of the first world war. The passage of the Smith-Hughes Act for vocational and agricultural education further cemented this connection and together, these laid out a path for US rural policymaking which would stretch across the next half-century.

The Commission on Country life–when examined by historians at all–receives treatment ranging from dismissal to derision. Scholars typically focused on Congressional refusal to fund the printing and dissemination of the commission's report, or the lack of a clearly unified policy response, without recognizing the impact it had on future legislation in less contentious environments. Some, however, looked deeper to identify policy changes with roots in the commission's recommendations. When historian Clayton Ellsworth published his analysis of "Roosevelt's Country Life Commission" in 1960, he wrote of a battle lost but a war won. Ellsworth called the report "the first recognition by a federal agency that the production of more excellent citizens on the farm was at least as important as the production of more, bigger and better hogs and cotton."[5] More recently, Scott Peters and Paul Morgan published a broader

[4] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 60th Cong., 2d sess., 1909, S. Doc. 705, 17.
[5] Clayton S. Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," *Agricultural History* 34, no. 4 (Fall 1960): 155–72, 156.

examination of the commission's intent and effect. They argue against labeling Country Life a failure, and instead see its report as a vision for agricultural sustainability, rooted in a deep desire to shape and address rural life holistically.[6] Close reading of the report and of the national debate surrounding it bears out this interpretation.

Roosevelt established the Commission on Country Life to assess the motives of young people choosing to move from country to city and to collect data regarding the resources and limitations of life in rural America. The commissioners detailed their understanding of its purpose when they wrote, "The work before us, therefore, is nothing more or less than the gradual rebuilding of a new agriculture and new rural life."[7] Such a declaration does not portend mere "commodity policy." Indeed, Roosevelt himself argued against a purely production—or commodity—based approach when he laid out the case for the work of the commission, instead asking participants to examine the whole of the rural life experience. This emphasis was not lost on farmers who responded to the Country Life survey. Their answers called for everything from road construction, to school improvements, to prohibition.[8]

Armed with these responses, reformers secured varying degrees of success in specific policy arenas, but their guiding intent remained unequivocal. Despite congressional pushback against Roosevelt's penchant for appointing presidential commissions, legislators almost immediately used the results of the Country Life Commission's report to justify the expansion of Rural Free Delivery (RFD) within the US postal system.[9] RFD strove to provide mail delivery services to farm mailboxes directly—saving the farmer lengthy trips into town—and grew to

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[6] Scott J. Peters and Paul A. Morgan, "The Country Life Commission: Reconsidering a Milestone in American Agricultural History," *Agricultural History* 78, no. 3 (Summer, 2004): 289-316.
[7] *Report of the Country Life Commission,* 60th Cong., 2d sess., 1909, S. Doc. 705, 17.
[8] Theodore Roosevelt, "Chapters of a Possible Autobiography 13th Installment," *Boston Globe*, January 25, 1914, 10.
[9] 43 Cong. Rec. 2334., 60th Cong., 2d sess., February 13, 1909, 43: 2334.

play a significant role in reshaping rural life. It first took effect in 1896 with strong support from agrarian populist organizations but the scope and cost of the program limited its nationwide implementation for nearly a decade. A few months after the Country Life Commission concluded its work, William Jennings Bryan publicly drew on its findings to demand postal road improvements for the sake of democracy, justice, education, and the continued existence of the rest of the nation.[10]

Some historians address the magnitude of this program's impact. In Dean Albertson's book, *Roosevelt's Farmer,* the author points to the expansion of Rural Free Delivery as a foundational difference between the farming world of a young future Secretary of Agriculture, Claude Wickard, and that of his father by widening the world of the younger Wickard and vastly increasing his access to educational materials. More emphatically, historian Lena Hecker concluded her 1920 Master's thesis on the subject with the declaration that "Rural free delivery promotes good farming, clear thinking and right living."[11] These concerns were not small, and they clearly moved beyond the scope of commodity matters.

The Commission on Country Life reflected not only Roosevelt's interest in restoring the glory of farm life, but an increasing national concern as well. In 1907, Eugene Davenport—then Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at the University of Illinois—delivered an address titled *The Next Step in Agricultural Education.* In it, he celebrated the recent effort to incorporate agriculture into public school curricula, arguing "Thinking men of all classes are now agreed that in some way and after some fashion agriculture must be taught in our public schools, both primary and secondary . . . not only the occupation of

[10] 43 Cong. Rec. 2642. 60th Cong., 2d sess., February 18, 1909, 43: 2642
[11] Dean Albertson, *Roosevelt's Farmer: Claude R. Wickard in the New Deal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 12. Lena Hecker, "The History of the Rural Free Mail Delivery in the United States" (master's thesis, Iowa State University, 1920), 91, https://ir.uiowa.edu/etd/4161/.

farming, but also the life of the farmer and the genius and spirit of country affairs; for agriculture is not only a profession but it is a mode of life."[12]

Davenport's activism on behalf of secondary agricultural education and the numerous proposals for its federal funding in Congress that year reveal a kind of rural life reckoning at the start of the twentieth century. Why, then, does the present work initiate the story of progressive agriculture policy within the Wilson administration? While Roosevelt asked profound questions regarding rural life in the United States, and while Country Life reformers brought national attention to the problem, it was not until Democrats established unified control of both houses of Congress and the presidency in the elections of 1912 that the way was cleared for significant legislative intervention.

Wilson rose to the presidency with perhaps less knowledge of the farm experience than some of his predecessors, but he quickly set out to understand the challenges faced by farmers and, in this effort, he relied upon friends like Walter Hines Page. Page was a North Carolina farmer and editor of *World's Work,* who had served on Roosevelt's Country Life Commission just a few years prior. He strongly advocated for agricultural reform, particularly through the land grant education system and he maintained close friendships with other farm leaders including future agriculture secretaries David Houston and Henry Wallace. Just days after his election, Wilson met with Page to better understand the concerns of American farm experts and Page impressed upon the president-elect the importance of "the big country life idea [for which] the chief instruments are the Agriculture Department [and] the Bureau of Education." Wilson also directly inquired of Page who might be the best man for the position of Secretary of

[12] Eugene Davenport, "The next Step in Agricultural Education or the Place of Agriculture in Our American System of Education" (lecture, Missouri State University, Columbia, MO, January 9, 1908), 1.

Agriculture. Their correspondence indicates Wilson intended to select Page himself but Page preferred not to hold government office and instead recommended his friend and colleague David Houston, whom Wilson promptly appointed. The Wilson administration clearly did not shy away from the message of Country Life, but rather embraced it and employed its adherents enthusiastically.[13]

By May 1914, a unified Congress codified this agenda with the passage of the Smith-Lever Act. The law provided for cooperative extension work utilizing the combined efforts of the USDA and the land grant institutions in each state to assist, demonstrate, and disseminate information in the fields of agriculture and home economics. Existing experiment stations created under the Hatch Experiment Station Act (1887) provided a bridge to this broader scope of purpose for the colleges. With this mission, Smith-Lever aimed to influence not just farming practices but the whole of the rural life experience. It specifically listed those not attending the colleges as its target beneficiaries and included prohibitions against using funds for internal developments, building construction, or college lectures. This program went straight to the heart of rural culture and practice, bringing direct federal involvement to the American family farm. [14]

Local newspapers heralded its passage with headlines like "US Ready to Aid in Farm Advancement" as states celebrated the influx of funding available to support their farmers.[15] County agents quickly got to work organizing demonstrations, short courses, and even years-long training programs in agriculture and home economics alike. Girls joined tomato clubs and

[13] Burton J. Hendrick, *The Life and Letters of Walter H. Page,* 1:110-112 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page, and Company, 1924), 112; for additional analysis of these events see Carl R. Woodward, "Woodrow Wilson's Agricultural Philosophy," *Agricultural History* 14, no. 4 (1940): 129-42.
[14] Agricultural Extension Act, Pub. L. No. 63-95, 38 Stat. 372 (1914).
[15] "US Ready to Aid in Farm Advancement," *Oklahoma Daily Live Stock News* (Oklahoma City, OK), May 19, 1914, 1.

took weekend canning seminars with lesson sheets sponsored by the USDA.[16] As revenue grew for such programs, more than half was commonly reserved for the work of the county agent, but a significant portion provided support for training in home economics and for boys and girls clubs. In Minnesota, for example, the 1915-16 year brought a total of $127,721 in funding. Of that, $69,351 funded county agent activities, $8,040 went to home demonstration, and $5,190 underwrote boys' and girls' club work.[17] County agents worked to provide constituents with detailed descriptions of their projects in local newspapers. This helped increase participation and rally support for the program. In Williston, ND, the Williams County agent announced five major projects for 1916 that ranged from a general "Instruction through conference" project to a very specific testing and vaccination program to fight black leg in milk cows.[18] Never before had the federal government of the United States taken such a forward role in the lives of her farmers, but intervention had only just begun.

Congress and the Wilson administration continued addressing the needs identified by the Country Life Commission and again increased federal involvement in agriculture with the passage of the Federal Farm Loan Act in July 1916. Like the leaders before him, Wilson saw a prosperous and thriving farm community as integral to the health of the entire nation and he expended significant effort to fully support this goal. From the moment he accepted the Democratic nomination, Wilson spoke about the importance of farm credit and of his intention to involve farmers directly in its planning. His first State of the Union address placed special emphasis on the partnership between farmer and policymaker.

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[16] "Canning Club and Home Demonstration Work in South Carolina," *Progressive Farmer* (Raleigh, NC), June 24, 1916, 25.
[17] "State Extension Fund $127,721 for 1915-16 Year," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, MN), November 7, 1915, 22.
[18] "Plans and Working Agreements," *Williston Graphic* (Williston, ND), December 16, 1915.

> Our thoughts may ordinarily be concentrated upon the cities and the hives of industry, upon the cries of the crowded market place and the clangor of the factory, but it is from the quiet interspaces of the open valleys and the free hillsides that we draw the sources of life and of prosperity, from the farm and the ranch, from the forest and the mine. Without these every street would be silent, every office deserted, every factory fallen into disrepair. And yet the farmer does not stand upon the same footing with the forester and the miner in the market of credit. He is the servant of the seasons. Nature determines how long he must wait for his crops, and will not be hurried in her processes. He give his note, but the season of its maturity depends upon the season when his crop matures. . . . And the security he gives is of a character not known in the broker's office or as familiarly as it might be on the counter of the banker…The farmers and the Government will henceforth work together as real partners.[19]

Using language reminiscent of Morrill, Wilson went on to suggest that the lack of intervention and support in this area placed the United States at a disadvantage when compared with more proactive European governments. With direction from Congress, Wilson sent a commission overseas to examine farm credit systems in Europe. His administration hoped to combine the lessons they learned there with the findings of the Country Life Commission and the direct input of American farmers–who often lacked access to reasonable loans–as they crafted a complex new banking system. The European example served as an outline for the US policy response, but reporters of this news and financial experts alike took care to draw distinctions between the European versions of rural credit and those that might work in the United States. They expressed particular concern over the high rate of tenancy here, pointing to the significantly higher rates of land ownership among farmers in Germany.[20]

Formally titled "An Act to provide capital for agricultural development" the resulting law established a system of regional farm loan banks to increase farmers' access to credit. Farm interest in this legislation proved so significant that the Treasury Department received hundreds

[19] Woodrow Wilson, First Annual Message, December 2, 1913, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/207582.
[20] "American Farmer and His New Bank," *Wilkes-Barre Semi-Weekly Record* (Wilkes-Barre, PA), October 13, 1916, 4; Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, July 15, 1916, 4.

of thousands of letters seeking information or copies of it, and the Federal Farm Loan Board was forced to issue huge reprints of the act from its operating budget "in order to meet the enormous demand for information . . . which cannot be met from the authorized public document supply."[21] Public support for the legislation swelled and headlines trumpeted, "Better Farming and Cheaper Food" and "Great Boon to Farmers!" Would-be borrowers quickly versed themselves in its requirements and began taking the necessary steps to apply for and receive loans.[22]

Wilson's concern for farmers' welfare stemmed from his profound belief in their importance to American democracy. This was never more apparent than when the United States stood on the brink of entry into World War I. Citing the Lord's Prayer in October 1916, he emphasized the primacy of that supplication "Give us this day our daily bread" and intoned, "America has no distinction unless it is a spiritual distinction, and America must use her farming resources and all her other resources to make citizens incomparably more interested in the general welfare than the citizens of any other country." He further declared, "You cannot worship God on an empty stomach. You cannot be a patriot when you are starving."[23]

By the time the need for production increases became acutely apparent, many had been calling for federally supported secondary agricultural education for years. Such an education, advocates believed, would simultaneously nurture the democratic ideals tied to work on the land, and would encourage the efficiency and the citizenship of the farmer himself. Eugene Davenport

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[21] "Farm Borrowing Made Easy" *The Holton Signal* (Holton, KS), November 9, 1916, 2; US Department of the Treasury, Federal Farm Loan Bureau, *Federal Farm Loan Act,* Circular No. 4, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1916), 2.

[22] "Better Farming and Cheaper Food," *Seattle Star*, August 21, 1916, 1; "Great Boon to Farmers," *The Messenger* (Owensboro, KY), August 30, 1916, 5; "First Federal Loan," *Adams County Free Press* (Corning, IA) August 15, 1917, 8.

[23] Woodrow Wilson, *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Ray Stannard Baker, William E. Dodd, and Howard Seavoy Leach, vol. 4, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), 374. Also appearing in Carl R. Woodward, "Woodrow Wilson's Agricultural Philosophy," *Agricultural History* 14, no. 4 (1940): 129-42.

pressed for the expansion of agricultural education even before Roosevelt launched his commission. Davenport underscored the importance of the effort by utilizing the same arguments found throughout the early republic, that agriculture was fundamental, and that closer association of all Americans with its special virtue would benefit the nation as a whole. "Other great industries are commonly controlled from central offices, but every farmer must have knowledge sufficient to make him intelligent concerning methods essential to permanent agricultural prosperity. . . . In this country, if our democratic institutions are to be preserved, and if our people are to labor together in peace and understanding, all classes must be educated in an atmosphere at least as liberal and as broad as all the interests of any single community can make it."[24]

For years, bills to establish and fund a national vocational education system languished, locked in a fierce debate over whether such schools should exist separately from the new public high schools, or be integrated within them. Davenport passionately supported the integration of these two programs but eventually struck a middle ground which allowed them to exist as separate "tracks" within a single school. The Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education worked with the House Committee on Education to hold a series of hearings on the subject. On the particular importance of farm education their report argued that of the 12,659,203 Americans engaged in agriculture at the 1910 census, "less than 1 percent of these have had adequate preparation for farming. This means that there are over 12,000,000 people engaged in agriculture in this country who are not trained to deal with the soil in such a way as to make it produce, through scientific methods, what it should yield in order to sustain the present and future life of this nation." They went on to admonish all Americans for too-long relying upon

[24] Davenport, "The next Step in Agricultural Education," 4.

natural soil fertility and westward expansion to ensure sufficient production. Now, they argued, the farmer must join forces with the national government to ensure careful stewardship and best practices, because only a comprehensive program of agricultural education could ensure that American soils remained "an inexhaustible source of wealth."[25]

In February 1917, opposing factions negotiated for support and successfully passed the Vocational Education Act, commonly referred to as the Smith-Hughes Act. It provided funding for education in agriculture, industrial and commercial employment, and homemaking, and established the only national education board in US history. Smith-Hughes played an important role in the education of rural youth not only in establishing better farming practices, but in providing all the facets of a liberal education aimed at crafting better citizens in addition to more employable ones.[26]

Less than two months later, this legislation would take on profound new importance when the US declared war on Germany. Just days after the US declaration of war, President Wilson spoke to farmers directly. He sought a huge return of labor to the farm by "young men and old alike" in order to produce the necessary yields to support the conflict. Placing unequivocal responsibility for victory on their shoulders, Wilson declared "Upon the farmers of this country, therefore, in large measure rests the fate of the war and the fate of the nations."[27]

The framework of agricultural policies established throughout the preceding years, and Wilson's inclusion of Country Life supporters within his administration, provided a natural springboard for wartime agriculture measures when US participation could no longer be avoided.

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[25] US Congress, House of Representatives*, Report of the Commission on National Aid to Vocational Education together with Hearings Held on the Subject*, 63rd Cong., 2d sess., 1914, H. Doc. 1004, 17-18.
[26] National Vocational Education Act, Pub. L. No. 347, 39 Stat. 929 (1917).
[27] Woodrow Wilson, *The Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson,* ed. Ray Stannard Baker, William E. Dodd, and Howard Seavoy Leach, vol. 5, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1925), 25.

Still, the Food and Fuel Control Act of 1917 (also called the Lever Act) did not emerge quietly. This embattled piece of legislation prompted months of heated congressional debate. The Lever Act provided for significant intervention in the pricing of "necessaries" such as wheat in order to stimulate farm production. It granted the president authority to establish price minimums following the Grain Standards Act of 1916, but went even further by preemptively setting the minimum for No. 1 northern spring at $2 per bushel for the 1918 year. It criminalized "evil practices" including market manipulation and speculation as felonies and set penalties for hoarding and noncompliance at a fine of $5,000 or two years in prison with charges brought under the jurisdiction of the US District Courts. Some saw it as the most radical legislative departure from American norms in US history. Media outlets warned that the act's de facto prohibition of distilled spirits and the significant power granted to Food Administrator Herbert Hoover might be untenable for opponents, including those at USDA. Yet it ultimately passed with overwhelming support, 360-0 in the House of Representatives and 66-7 in the Senate. How did proponents manage to secure such widespread assent to so contested a proposal?[28]

While other countries experimented with rationing, Hoover and fellow Food Administration leaders insisted the United States could not protect or promote democracy through compulsion. Instead, they reasoned, the USFA must look and *be* uniquely American in design. Thus, it might not merely win the Great War through food stability, but simultaneously instill, promote, and exemplify democratic values by its voluntary nature. The democratic underpinnings proved vital not only to ensuring compliance with the law but to securing its passage in the first place. Hoover, determined to address the global food crisis immediately,

[28] For extensive coverage of the political battle surrounding the Lever Act, see George H. Nash, *The life of Herbert Hoover: Master of Emergencies, 1917-1918* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996); Food and Fuel Control Act, Pub. L. No. 41, 40 Stat. 276 (1917); "Lever Bill before Senate" New York Times, June 17, 1917, 1.

would not wait for the Congressional battle to resolve before implementing his plan. Instead, he turned to volunteers and women's organizations to initiate conservation efforts, relying upon the established networks discussed above to support implementation. By laying the groundwork before passage of the act, Hoover was able to demonstrate his intention and resolve that this should be a benevolent and voluntary dictatorship grounded in the American "spirit of self-sacrifice," and that he was the perfect man for the job.[29]

His efforts began by winning over the womenfolk. Rightly perceiving women as the chief decision-makers of the dinner menu, Hoover immediately reached out to women's groups across the country and requested their support. Pledge drives and placards created an environment of social pressure to comply with voluntary conservation efforts. How-to manuals disseminated through home demonstration agents offered instructions and recipes for the compliant housewife, and female college students were taught in courses authored by the USFA to "lead gently" and "serve attractively" as they fought the war from their own kitchens. [30]

Once the act became law, full implementation proved a challenging task. Wilson, having found that "an emergency exists requiring stimulation of the production of wheat," signed an executive order creating the Food Administration Grain Corporation to help regulate pricing and encourage high-yield practices. Its 50-50 substitute rule required that any purchase of wheat flour must be accompanied by the purchase of a substitute grain of equal weight. Enforcing this rule, procuring wheat under government contracts, and enforcing anti-hoarding provisions required

[29] Nash, *The Life of Herbert Hoover*, 15.
[30] US Food Administration, *War Economy in Food: With Suggestions and Recipes for Substitutions in the Planning of Meals* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 12.

teams of state administrators that needed to be recruited, trained, and equipped for their new roles. [31]

County sheriffs combined forces with county food administrators to arrest those caught violating the act. One case of sugar hoarding in Clay County, Arkansas reveals the extreme commitment of community residents to the provisions of this law. After the hoarder was arrested, the local sheriff was directed by the state food administration to transfer him into protective custody when the prisoner faced an attempted lynching. Some food administrator nominees proved wary of accepting the position while others abused their positions for political or economic gain. Neighbors reported one another for suspected hoarding and inundated administrators with complaints over violations of the substitute rule. Still, the willingness of state administrators to participate in the apparatus at all, and the deep sense of patriotism and duty appearing in complaint letters, demonstrate just how persuasive Hoover's narrative of national service through agriculture had become. [32]

Administrators from the state to the county level signed contracts and took oaths bearing remarkable similarity to oaths of military service. The swore to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign or domestic . . . without reservation or purpose of evasion" and promised to collect no salary for their efforts.[33] Some farmers believed so strongly in their patriotic duty to comply that they sought specific, personal direction

[31] US Food Administration, "Report of the Activities of the Enforcement Division," *Official Statement of the United States Food Administration,* no. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 6, 1918).
[32] C.L. Daniel to Hamp Williams, 5 April 1918, Box 1, Folder 3, Correspondence with County Food Administrators, Records of the US Food Administration, Record Group 4, National Archives, Fort Worth, Texas.
[33] US Food Administration Certificate of Appointment, 25 January 1918, Correspondence with County Food Administrators, Records of the US Food Administration, Record Group 4, National Archives, Fort Worth, Texas;

from their food administrators as to how much of their own wheat they should eat, one writing, "I support the Food Administration and I am willing to fight and die . . . if it takes all our wheat to win the war and I have to eat only corn bread I am willing to do that to win the war for my country."[34]

Despite earlier discord, the US Food Administration and USDA worked together in the interest of wartime agriculture. In late March 1918, Administrator Hoover and Agriculture Secretary David Houston called together a meeting of the Advisory Committee of Agricultural and Livestock Producers to examine the national situation and to exchange information about policies and concerns. In the words of Hoover, the line between the two governmental organizations remained "very undefined," but the Food Administration focused on "the business phases of foodstuffs as distinguished from production." Some tension remained apparent in their remarks but the two men took turns dispelling misinformation and addressing producer questions in their respective areas of control. Houston spoke at length about the department's seed initiatives to identify, catalog, and potentially distribute seed in an environment of extremely limited availability. The committee also endorsed and encouraged the continuation of USDA intervention with fertilizer merchants to ensure uninterrupted accessibility at reasonable prices. In addition to the work of the Advisory Committee, information on USDA efforts and on available support continued to be disseminated through the land grant colleges and extension offices. [35]

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[34] A. H. Lafferty to Hamp Williams, Corning, AR, undated, Box 1, Folder 3, Correspondence with County Food Administrators, Records of the US Food Administration, Record Group 4, National Archives, Fort Worth, Texas.

[35] Advisory Committee of Agricultural and Live-Stock Producers, United States Food Administration, *Report of Advisory Committee of Agricultural and Live-Stock Producers, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture and the Food Administration* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1918), 1-6.

Extension circulars preached ominously of the risk of privation if farmers failed to feed the nation and its allies. A North Carolina bulletin from March 1918 warned farmers in the state that, while the national food situation was serious, the state reality bordered on calamity. Director B. W. Kilgore admonished his farmers to plant more of most every crop, specifically corn, which he directed should be increased by at least ten percent, and soybeans, which should climb by twenty percent. Cotton could be reduced in acreage to make room for food crops, but should be cultivated with greater care so as to improve yields and maintain necessary cash profits. While Kilgore's circular focused on commodity-specific instruction, his opening paragraphs utilized exactly the same military language directed at other groups. Support of the Army and Navy and furnishing the desperate needs of the Allies remained paramount.[36]

On October 29, 1917, William McCormick Blair, Director of the Committee on Public Information, sent word to his Four Minute Men that they should prepare to advocate for "Food Pledge Week" on behalf of the US Food Administration. His exhortation began by emphasizing the twin purposes of the USFA, price regulation and "promulgat[ing] the gospel of food conservation." Blair's memo directed the Four Minute Men to appeal to the conscience of their audience and to draw on the communal sense of patriotism they shared. "While Europe issues bread cards, we issue pledge cards" he pressed. "Conscience must reign. If not, what then? Picture America—on compulsory rations!" Leading by example, and lending an aspirational air to conservation, First Lady Edith Wilson signed the first pledge card. Blair encouraged the Four Minute Men to tout her participation as a prime example of American womanhood and to remind

[36] North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, "Food Production Campaign for North Carolina," *Extension Circular* no. 65 (March 1918): 1-3.

listeners that their "minor deprivations" amounted to no less than the very salvation of western civilization. [37]

Mrs. Wilson was not the only woman held up as a national example of feminine virtue in wartime conservation. The War Course, offered by the Home Economics Department of the National League for Women's Service, trained women to serve as captains of food-saving teams including highly recognizable names like Eleanor Roosevelt and Mrs. J. Prentice Kellogg. Soon, leading women's organizations of all types became involved in the effort. Even groups that took a limited view of women's role in national issues could not refuse participation in a cause so feminine and noble. Despite her criticism of women "milling about" in efforts with a "military flavor," Miss Alice Hill Chittenden, President of the New York State Association Opposed to Woman Suffrage, called upon her members to help shepherd Hoover's cause around an obstacle they believed he was unaware of, that of the so-called "servant slacker."[38]

With the groundwork laid by women's organizations, the USFA prepared to launch its first major push to housewives across the country in October 1917. Food Pledge Week had arrived. Rousing speeches in military language called American women into service, aiming "to enlist as nearly as possible one hundred per cent of America's twenty-two million households in an army that will wholeheartedly support food conservation." Should this effort fail, the Four

[37] William McCormick Blair, Committee on Public Information, *4 Minute Men Food Pledge Week Bulletin* no. 18 (October 29, 1917): 1; The Four Minute Men included 75,000 speechmakers who delivered short addresses on the ongoing war effort under the direction of the Committee on Public Information, so-called because their short speeches took place in the four minute intervals during reel changes at movie theaters. Speech contents and instructions were distributed through this regular newsletter, sent to all participants in the program.

[38] "New York will aid in Saving of Food" *New York Times,* June 19, 1917; "Getting Behind Hoover in the Kitchen" *New York Times,* June 17, 1917.

Minute Men warned, "western civilization cannot go on." More dramatic language can scarcely be imagined. [39]

Official how-to manuals published by the GPO made clear the arguments for conservation and the expectations placed upon American families. These books ensured broader coverage of the nation as a whole via distribution through local teachers and school systems. In his preface to *Food Guide for War Service at Home,* Hoover acknowledged that ordinary citizens might not fully understand the global crisis. To remedy this, he set about imbuing the kitchen service of America's women not only with a sense of patriotism but with a sense of democratic superiority and agricultural adaptability rooted in the national farming identity. Of the situation in Europe, Hoover declared in his opening line, "her peoples stand constantly face to face with starvation." This brief book explained worldwide cultural differences in the consumption of wheat and called for Americans to make a life-saving sacrifice that only they could. French housewives, it revealed, had neither the expertise nor the facilities to make breads, and certainly no time to learn. According to the text "She is doing a man's work and her own woman's labor besides."[40]

Women in India were depicted with similar limitations. Knowing only rice, they could not be expected to produce or adapt to substitutes. If these people could not rely on a steady supply of culturally appropriate cereals, the US Food Administration warned of a "serious weakening of the[ir] marvelous courage."[41] Only *American* women, and *American* farmers, with patriotism and ingenuity, could solve this global crisis and help bring about a victorious

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[39] William McCormick Blair, Committee on Public Information, *4 Minute Men Food Pledge Week Bulletin* no. 18 (October 29, 1917): 1, 4.
[40] US Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Education, US Food Administration, *Food Guide for War Service at Home*, by Katharine Blunt, Frances L. Swain, Florence Powdermaker, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1918), 27.
[41] US Food Administration, *Food Guide for War Service at Home*, 13.

conclusion to the war. The book was careful not to represent these women as lazy. Of course, women around the globe demonstrated adaptability and ingenuity in the feeding of their families as they have throughout history. For the volume to characterize them otherwise would only serve to undermine calls for benevolence and shared privation. Instead, USFA officials used the suffering of women in allied nations to demonstrate the precarious position of democracy worldwide.

> Let us remember that every flag that flies opposite the enemies' is by proxy the American flag, and that the armies fighting in our defense under these flags cannot be maintained through this winter unless there is food enough for them and for their women and children at home. There can be food enough only if America provides it. And America can provide it only by the personal service and patriotic cooperation of all of us.[42]

In these depictions allied nations did all that they could, but the exclusive responsibility for saving the world and preserving democracy fell to the farmers and housewives of the United States. This narrative of patriotic self-reliance and creativity brought millions of Americans into compliance with the policies of the United States Food Administration.

Hoover took to the big screen to spread the message of the Food Administration to those unreached by publications and college courses. The earlier partnership between the National Association of Motion Pictures Advertisers and the Treasury Department in support of the Liberty Loan program provided a model that the USFA could replicate for even wider dissemination of its message. Given high national attendance at motion picture screenings, officials hoped this additional propaganda arm would "tell women of America how to avoid waste . . . [and] educate all of the people in what to do and what not to do in the great and pressing food problem."[43]

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[42] US Food Administration, *War Economy in Food,* 11.
[43] "New York Will Aid In Saving of Food, Motion Pictures Invoked" *New York Times,* June 18, 1917.

With similar aim, home demonstration agents conducted presentations and distributed leaflets on conservation to their local communities. USFA understood that program success depended on mass participation, and greater compliance resulted from broad information campaigns and social pressure. For areas with large populations of non-English speakers, pamphlets were translated into native languages and advertisements run in foreign language newspapers. The manual *Food and the War* provided home demonstration agents with specific instructions for recruiting and training volunteers, selecting relevant literature, and tailoring presentations to match local customs and resources with the constant reminder of the centrality of women to this mission.[44]

Prescribed demonstrations did not depart from ingrained Anglo-American foodways but rather encouraged creative conformity. "Suitable" topics included white sauce made from substitutes, cheese soufflés as a meat alternative, and wheatless quickbreads like biscuits and muffins. This was not a time to experiment with ethnic cuisine or seek council from immigrant communities. The aim of conservation and substitution was to preserve American food customs while providing for the global allied community. Demonstration agents were expected to provide clear, detailed lessons in foods their audiences recognized with printed instructions that could be easily replicated.[45]

Available literature ranged from book-length publications to simple cards and single page pamphlets. In January 1918 the USFA issued a longer guide for housewives to encourage compliance with voluntary conservation. The thirty-page booklet, titled *War Economy in Food with Suggestions and Recipes for Substitutions in the Planning of Meals,* opened with a call

[44] US Food Administration, *Food and the War: A Textbook for College Classes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 271, 264.
[45] US Food Administration, *Food and the War*, 372.

directly from the president. A reprint of Wilson's letter to Hoover from June 12, 1917, praised American women for rushing to support the "national ideals" and reminded them that they had no better avenue for contributing to US war aims than by "enlisting in the service of the Food Administration and cheerfully accepting its direction and advice."[46] The presidential directive included a pledge card–for the rare woman who had not already signed one–and a reminder that only by enlisting in this program could she earn her membership window card, and by extension, the respect of her neighbors. Hoover allowed no excuse for non-participation and made abundantly clear the reliance of his organization on social circles for enforcement. "We have but one police force," he said, "the American woman–and we depend upon her to organize in cooperation with our state and local Food Administrators to see that these rules are obeyed by that small minority who may fail."[47]

The publication continued the themes of patriotism and domestic military service through repeated references to privation among allies and reminders that "only the simplest of living is patriotic." The sacrifice of American housewives appeared gloriously militaristic by USFA design. Noncompliance and opposition provided "direct assistance to the enemy," and the agency did not hesitate to call out detractors as enemies themselves.[48]

Like farmers and housewives, American college students received special attention from the Food Administration. The agency designed courses and published textbooks to support the mission of production and conservation, using themes identical to those found in the literature aimed at other groups. For college men, Food Administration service appeared as an immediate backup option for those who could not "get into the ranks." Textbooks instilled a deep sense of

[46] US Food Administration, *War Economy in Food*, 5.
[47] "Hoover Decrees 'Victory Bread and Cut Rations" *New York Times,* January 27, 1918, 1-2.
[48] US Food Administration, *War Economy in Food,* 10.

pride in participation by appealing to patriotic duty and emphasizing the military-like service of the Food Administration. “The battlefield is here. The battle is now. It is as important for you to do your duty at home as it is for the boys to do theirs ‘over there.’ It is as necessary to provide food for our armies, and for the armies and families of the Allies, as it is to face the enemy.” This approach took advantage of the shame or regret some felt at their inability to enlist and provided an alternative path for honorable war service. A separate foreword for college women took a similar approach, casting them as protectors of a democratic world in peril.[49]

Through these courses, both women and men were called into the service of their country, to fight the war by what they ate. Participants were not limited to a select few at key institutions; USFA’s *Food and the War* course appeared at more than 700 colleges and normal schools in the 1918 spring semester, and over 40,000 students enrolled in these sessions. The Food Administration awarded certificates to those who completed the agency’s curriculum and then enrolled the women as volunteers under a state secretary, averaging over 300 per state.[50]

Secondary agricultural education was also rallied to the cause of war through the framework of the Smith-Hughes act. The pamphlet *Training the Boy to Win the War* provided a detailed outline of how non-farm high school boys could modify their course plans to add special training in agriculture work, and then be released to farm labor as a member of the US Boys’ Working Reserve prior to the end of the school term. Interested students received instructions first to have their parents sign enrollment consent forms, then to register for the special

[49] US Food Administration, *War Economy in Food,* Foreword.
[50] US Food Administration, *War Economy in Food,* 265-6.

agriculture program as an elective. School leadership would arrange for their early completion of the term and would oversee their assignment to farms in need of labor. [51]

University of Illinois Agriculture Dean Eugene Davenport helped author this special curriculum that included patriotic instruction and war propaganda in addition to lessons on "useful knots," "corn cultivators," and "threshing time." The governor of Illinois called it a patriotic way for boys to earn their high school credits and State Council of Defense Superintendent Frances Blair reminded them "every shoot on a stalk of corn is a shot at our nation's enemies. Every head of wheat is a flag of victory." These high school students, like so many other Americans, found their wartime experiences swept up in the whirlwind of farm crisis and agriculture policy.[52]

To bolster the predominate messaging of democracy and patriotism, Food Administration officials fell back on supplemental arguments such as cost-savings and scientific nutrition. USFA literature often referenced food "notions" with scorn, insisting that baseless ideas must be rejected in favor of dietary science. Farmers were enticed with stabilized prices, husbands with cost-effectiveness, wives with opportunities for leadership and community status, and students with the chance to study an interesting new field, but all were brought in with appeals to duty, democracy, and nationhood.[53]

These appeals fostered a sense of cohesion and shared national identity that helped ensure compliance with—and paved the way for—sweeping intervention in agriculture. Where a farmer might once have eschewed the scientific methods taught by extension agents, he now felt a

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[51] Illinois War Council, United States Boys' Working Reserve, Illinois Division, *Training the Boy to Win the War: Outline of a Plan for Principals and Teachers* (Springfield: Illinois State Council of Defense, 1918).
[52] Illinois War Council, *Training the Boy to Win the War,* 2-6.
[53] US Department of Agriculture, *Food Guide for War Service at Home,* 11.

patriotic duty to implement them. Where a teenage boy might once have derided the Smith-Hughes agriculture track offered at his high school, he now embraced the program as his own wartime service. Where a wealthy urban housewife might once have scorned cornbread as indicative of poverty or low manners, she now served it as a status symbol, connoting her exemplary commitment to the cause of democracy. Publications and records from the United States Food Administration provide inexorable evidence of nation-building agricultural policy in service both to the agency's immediate wartime goals of conservation and price stabilization, and to the larger post-war aim of democratic supremacy on a global scale. Participants were reminded time and again that their voluntary participation in this program directly countered command economies and dictatorial alternatives. Propaganda recast participation through the lens of military service, and window placards purposefully cultivated a sense of social pressure and conformity. Though not all Americans embraced this narrative, millions were only too happy to help fight the war from their fields and kitchen tables and, by extension, to move closer to that "civilization in full harmony with the best American ideals."

CHAPTER 3: THE STRUGGLE WITH SURPLUS

In the aftermath of World War I, American agriculture fell into deep depression. While the first two decades of the twentieth century brought parity pricing and vast acreage expansion, the war's end brought plummeting demand internationally and price collapse domestically. Policymakers fought hard to remedy the disaster, even under administrations that preferred a *laissez faire* approach in other arenas. They saw agricultural prosperity as foundational for national prosperity, but they also struck at significant structural problems in rural life that stretched far beyond commodity concerns. In so doing, they demonstrated the influence of agricultural progressivism even in years one might not expect to find it. These policymakers aimed to create a rural world more modernized, more efficient, and more sustainable. They believed that world—though still, often purposefully, excluding persons of color—would be more perfectly American, and more emblematic of Jefferson's ideal. [1]

The depth and breadth of the post-war crisis provided the foundation for the onslaught of agricultural policies which attempted to remedy it. A. Sykes, president of the Corn Belt Meat Producers' Association, described the plight of the corn farmer who now had to pay "400 bushels of corn for a wagon which they used to buy for 150 bushels…or 33 bushels for the shoes that formerly cost 9 bushels." He explained that prices this low wiped out other local operations such as schools and roads by impoverishing farmers and reducing local tax bases while placing increased strain on limited resources. The compounding effect of these hardships resulted in general devastation across the countryside.[2]

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[1] Gilbert C. Fite, "The Farmers' Dilemma, 1919-1929," In *Changes and Continuity in Twentieth Century America: The 1920s*, ed. John Braeman, Robert Bremner, and David Brody (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), 67.
[2] US Congress, House, *Report of the National Agricultural Conference,* March 3, 1922, 67th Cong., 2d sess., 1922, H. Doc. 195, 34.

Cotton farmers faced similarly depressed prices and unsellable surpluses. Throughout the agricultural depression of the 1920s, the American Cotton Association undertook its own efforts to stem the tide of the cotton surplus, securing promises of acreage reduction with appeals to "the wisdom and patriotism of the cotton grower."[3] The association secretary reassured readers that they had secured an average acreage reduction of thirty percent across the nation for the 1921 growing year, and that reduction in fertilizer and the impact of the boll weevil should further limit yields and increase prices. Unfortunately for cotton in the 1920s, voluntary reductions did not succeed in reducing massive surpluses overall, and Hoover's Federal Farm Board, established by the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929, found itself unintentionally encouraging production, then folding under the weight of the excess.[4]

Reflecting back on this period several years later, Administrator of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, H. R. Tolley, recalled decades of cotton crisis and revealed startling figures from the world cotton trade. Tolley explained that in the 1927-29 growing years, American cotton made up 46% of all cotton purchased worldwide, but by the 1935-36 season, the USA's market share had shrunk to 32%. In 1937, American cotton accounted for merely 24% of the world market. Over this period, Tolley noted, prices for the purchase of foreign cotton stood consistently twenty percent below the price for US cotton.[5]

James E. Boyle, professor of Rural Economy at Cornell University, also noted this loss of market-share when he wrote that America's place in the international cotton markets faltered with President Hoover's attempt to raise cotton above its market price (then eighteen cents per

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[3] "Joseph O. Thompson Arraigns Federal Farm Board's Futile Cotton Policies," *The Montgomery Advertiser* (Montgomery, Alabama), August 2, 1931, 4.
[4] Harvie Jordan, "What will be the Cotton Crop of 1921?" *Manufacturers Record* 79, no. 22 (June 2, 1921): 125.
[5] H. R. Tolley, "Defending the Washington Plan to Aid Cotton Growers," *New York Times,* October 10, 1937, 76.

pound). Boyle argued that Hoover's promise of sky-high prices immediately prompted foreign countries like Brazil to enter the trade and encouraged those already in production, such as Egypt, to dramatically increase output. Boyle cited the Smoot-Hawley tariff as further cause for America's international losses. He affirmed that the "tariff made it impossible for some old customers to buy our cotton at all. Sales to Germany, France, England, and Japan showed immediate and drastic slumps. We kept the cotton at home and called it a surplus."[6]

US dairy operations also struggled. For dairy farmers, WWI created a market for manufactured milk goods that had hardly existed prior to the conflict. Products such as evaporated and sweetened condensed milk had been formulated and patented as early as 1856. However, these did not gain widespread acceptance until the US government purchased substantial amounts of the "healthful" and shelf-stable dairy items for large numbers of troops deployed overseas. The conclusion of the war greatly reduced demand for such products and ushered in what some scholars have called the "disappearance of the manufactured milk market."[7] This worsened the already difficult circumstances of dairy farmers in the 1920s and contributed to an overall collapse in price they could not withstand.

It was in this context of agricultural crisis, in the aftermath of global war, that Warren G. Harding began his campaign for the White House. On September 8, 1920, Harding delivered a speech written by Henry C. Wallace at the Minnesota State Fair which expressed his agricultural policy and that of his party. "The time has come" he said, "when, as a nation, we must determine upon a definite agricultural policy." Here, he acknowledged the struggles faced by farmers in the

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[6] James E. Boyle, "Disaster is Seen in Federal Regulation of Cotton," *New York Times,* August 29, 1937, 60; Adapted in part from Amanda Biles, "Politics and Production Control," (master's thesis, University of Central Oklahoma, 2011).

[7] Eric M. Erba and Andrew M. Novakovic, *The Evolution of Milk pricing and Government Intervention in Dairy Markets*, E.B. 95-05, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Agricultural, Resource, and Managerial Economics Department Publications, 1995), 4.

aftermath of the war, and he called for an emphasis on the welfare of the farmer not as an end unto itself, but for the success of the entire nation. The future president expressed a reluctance to prescribe and impose a system of control on America's farmers from Washington, and yet, even this champion of "normalcy" pointed to significant areas of concern that required government-led adjustment. [8]

First, Harding warned ominously of an overemphasis on grain production that "depletes the fertility of our land…and results in . . . widespread agricultural distress." His solution called for direct intervention given the high stakes. "Our government should do everything in its power to restore the normal balance between live stock and grain production, and thus encourage the prompt return to that system of diversified farming by which alone we can maintain our soil fertility. This is a matter of immediate importance to all of our people." Harding emphasized the severity of this situation by declaring the end of agricultural expansion and the disappearance of open, fertile land. His language here echoed the same interest in sustainability demonstrated by the Country Life reformers a decade earlier and foretold the coming Dust Bowl crisis.[9]

His speech went on to warn of the "increasing evil" of farm tenancy, reflecting the language and the apprehension of many USDA reformers and agricultural economists of the day. Calling tenancy a "real menace to national welfare," Harding broke down what he saw as its chief abuse. "The tenant . . . who too often is working under a short term lease, is forced to farm the land to the limit and rob it of its fertility in order to pay the rent. Thus we have a sort of conspiracy between the landlord and tenant to rob the soil upon which our national well-being and indeed our very existence depend." His proposed cure for this social and economic evil was

[8] Warren G. Harding, Speech to the Minnesota State Fair, September 8, 1920, in *Speeches of Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio, Republican Candidate for President, From His Acceptance of the Nomination to October 1, 1920* (Washington, DC: Republican National Committee, 1920), 129-141.
[9] Harding, Speech to the Minnesota State Fair, 139.

effective use of the Farm Loan Act to help tenants secure the purchase of their land and a government-sponsored land leasing system which respected both parties while protecting soil fertility for the good of the nation. Though Harding disfavored presidential activism, he nonetheless helped lay the groundwork for agricultural intervention throughout his administration and beyond.[10]

He also reflected the clear intent of the 1920 Republican Party platform with respect to agriculture. That document called the farmer "the backbone of the nation." It insisted that American greatness depended upon an even distribution of her people between city and country, and called for shared prosperity and equity between them. Just as Harding had said in his speech, the party platform declared farm tenancy an evil that must be stamped out through the judicious use of the Federal Farm Loan Act. The aims outlined in Harding's campaign speech and in his party's platform reveal the degree to which the Republicans of the 1920s favored an agricultural policy that would reshape the whole of rural society.[11]

Harding easily secured the presidency with significant voter support, both farmer and otherwise, and selected as his secretary of agriculture Henry C. Wallace, who often advised on farm issues throughout the campaign. A farmer himself, Wallace had gained notoriety and support with his editorship of the *Wallace's Farmer* publication years earlier. Henry C. Wallace also carried deep connections to the Country Life Commission, having watched his father serve as a key member of that group. Historian Gilbert Fite demonstrates that, by the time of Harding's inauguration, "it had become evident . . . that the new Republican administration had no positive agricultural program," but while a specific policy outline had not crystalized by 1921, the aims

[10] Harding, Speech to the Minnesota State Fair, 139.
[11] The Republican National Committee, *Speeches of Senator Warren G. Harding of Ohio, Republican Candidate for President, From His Acceptance of the Nomination to October 1, 1920* (Washington, DC: Republican National Committee, 1920), 6.

remained undeniable. Fite notes the void here and details the coalescing of the Farm Bloc and policy experiments that ranged from tariff adjustment to diversification incentives. He juxtaposes the proliferation of proposed solutions against lack of demonstrable assistance and could not have put it any plainer when he wrote, "Indeed, if farmers could have cashed the advice they were given on how to solve their problems, they would have been rich."[12] He was certainly right about the magnitude of suggestions, but later writers seemed to confuse the lack of results with a lack of intervention in the first place and, in so doing, they fail to see the many ways that the progressive strain in agricultural policy persisted throughout the decade.

Wallace himself made many policy suggestions favoring direct assistance and subsidy payments, and he supported and oversaw Harding's National Conference on Agriculture in 1922. The conference pursued twin purposes, first a clear response to the current agricultural crisis, and second a plan for the future of farming that fulfilled "our destiny…[to] be a well-rounded nation." As he opened the event, Harding made clear that this destiny necessitated agriculture's salvation, not merely for the benefit of the farmer, but for the expansion of industry, the availability of timber, and the prospect of national self-sufficiency. Wallace's introduction made the connection even plainer when he declared, "The agriculture of the Nation is in a bad state, and our entire business and industrial life is suffering in consequence." [13]

After the initial proceedings, the conference broke out into smaller committees tasked with examining specific farm issues. These ranged from transportation to marketing to education and home life. Committees then submitted final reports at the conclusion of the event. Recommendations from the conference committees covered agriculture and rural life from all

[12] Gilbert Fite, *George N. Peek and the Fight for Farm Parity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 17.
[13] US Congress, House, *Report of the National Agricultural Conference,* March 3, 1922, 67th Cong., 2d sess., 1922, H. Doc. 195, 3, 11.

angles. The Farm Population and Farm Home committee offered a number of proposals specifically targeting the country life experience, including rural health initiatives and the establishment of public hospitals, the development by state and federal agencies of free circulating libraries, and educational assistance through Extension. They also firmly endorsed the expansion of home economics under the National Vocational Educational act and recommended anti-tenancy programs to encourage stability in farm home life. In all, the conference committees submitted twenty-six recommendations for Congressional action. Of those, less than half concerned what might be termed "commodity policy."[14]

Approximately one month later, the Capper-Volstead Act authorizing cooperative marketing agreements became law. By April, more of the conference recommendations thundered through the halls of Congress, championed by the Farm Bloc as a means to alleviate post-war suffering. On April 13, 1922, Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas called for a "constructive national program" that would bring prosperity to the cities by first growing it in the countryside. Like Harding, he also spoke of correcting the "evils" of tenancy. Throughout this period, intervention plans consistently excluded the renter or sharecropper—except, when possible, to convert him into owner—and prized the Jeffersonian yeoman ideal above all.[15]

Of all the proposed farm legislation during this period, none proved more prominent—or more controversial—than the McNary-Haugen bill. This proposal drew its blueprint from the ideas of George Peek and the fight for so-called "parity" pricing. The basic structure of the plan involved separating surplus from domestic consumption totals and unloading that surplus in the world market regardless of price. If the global price dropped below the domestic price, a fee was

[14] US Congress, House, *Report of the National Agricultural Conference,* March 3, 1922, 67th Cong., 2d sess., 1922, H. Doc. 195, 180-6.
[15] Arthur Capper, US Congress, *Journal of the Senate of the United States*, 67th Cong. 2nd sess., April 13, 1922, 5471.

to be assessed against farmers' domestic sales to cover the loss. Fite demonstrates that lobbying by farm organizations materialized slowly in the 1920s, and for this reason, several years elapsed between the bill's first proposal and its eventual passage by Congress. Most relevant to the argument here are the conversations that occurred between these two milestones. What were legislators, bureaucrats, and activists hoping to accomplish with these proposals?[16]

When Peek addressed this question at a gathering of the Farm Bureau, he decried the "rapid development of peasantry in the United States" and the reality that, without relief, young people in rural communities found no other option but to relocate into town. This bill, he insisted, merely brought to agriculture the advantages already granted to other industries by the US government.[17] Senator Smith Brookhart of Iowa used similar language, blaming deflation policy and tariff intervention for agriculture's "prostrate condition as a result of government action."[18] Senator Charles Timberlake of Colorado also presented the bill as an emergency correction of disparity between agriculture and industry, but added emphasis on the harm that would spread to "city businesses and industrial conditions" if rural families persisted in massive outmigration from their farms.[19]

Despite long lists of farm organizations endorsing the bill, it continued to languish in Congress for years. Then Vice President Coolidge ascended to the presidency following Harding's death in August 1923. Farmers and farm wives, like Mrs. Fred Klinge, wrote to their new president of their desperate circumstances and begged for the program that might save them

[16] For a complete examination of George N. Peek and the McNary-Haugen bill see Gilbert Fite, *George N. Peek and the Fight for Farm Parity* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954).
[17] Henry A. Wallace, "M'Nary-Haugen Day at the Fair," *The Des Moines Register,* September 8, 1924, 4.
[18] Senator Smith Brookhart, Speaking on March 11, 1924, 65th Cong. 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 65, pt. 4:3958
[19] Senator Charles Timberlake, Speaking on April 11, 1924, 65th Cong. 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 65, pt. 6:6151.

from having to "go to the city and each one of us go to work at something we know nothing about."[20]

Coolidge, however, proved less amenable to the parity principle advocated by George Peek, notwithstanding its endorsement by Secretary Wallace in November. Instead, the president preferred Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover's approach to the so-called "farm problem." Coolidge regularly wrote to farm magazine editors like Alson Secor at *Successful Farming* and Herbert Myrick at *Farm and Home* who reassured the president that agriculture's situation was improving and could be advanced further by the promotion of scientific advancement and general progress. Myrick expounded,

> No more salve for the sores of agriculture will meet the situation. Upon the fundamental industry of farming all others depend, but agriculture also depends upon these other industries for its markets and for its purchases. Thus all industries, all classes, all people, are interdependent. Provide them all with a square deal and a fair chance and all will prosper–the farmer along with the rest. . . . This vital principle, firmly grounded in Nature and human nature, attested by religion and science, is the basis upon which the United States may lead in the evolution of social and economic forces favorable to bringing about gradually more even distribution of wealth with consequent reduction of misery and want.[21]

Upon Wallace's death, Coolidge took the opportunity to replace the agriculture secretary with William Jardine, another opponent of the parity-based McNary-Haugen Bill. At the time, Jardine had been serving as the president of Kansas State Agricultural College, and he brought experience not only as a farmer but also as an agronomist, educator, and administrator to Washington, DC. [22]

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[20] Mrs. Fred Klinge to Calvin Coolidge, October 6, 1923, Calvin Coolidge Papers: Series 1: Executive Office Correspondence, 1923 -1929; Case file 227, mss16741, reel 103, Library of Congress.
[21] Herbert Myrick to Calvin Coolidge, October 1, 1923, Calvin Coolidge Papers: Series 1: Executive Office Correspondence, 1923 -1929; Case file 227, mss16741, reel 103, Library of Congress.
[22] Fite, *Peek,* 57; For extensive coverage of this transition and the background and experience of Jardine, see C. Fred Williams, "William M. Jardine and the Foundations for Republican Farm Policy, 1925-1929," *Agricultural History* 7, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 216-232.

Jardine prioritized farmer education—which had been a significant component in his "Sound Agricultural Policy for Kansas" program—and believed that legislation could solve only part of what ailed rural America. The purpose of farm legislation, he argued, was "to bring about a situation in which men…act in harmony with the general welfare in the present and with the welfare of posterity."[23] These words bore much in common with the reformers who had gone before him. Agriculture policy would not be about merely helping the farmer, but about modernizing his operation and correcting his faults, too.

Agricultural economists at USDA pursued these same aims. In the fall of 1923, Henry C. Taylor, then chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE), traveled to Montana to meet with M.L. Wilson, head of the Department of Agricultural Economics at the Montana State Agricultural College. Together with funding from John D. Rockefeller Jr., the two men launched a plan to remake the desperate circumstances of Montana wheat farmers using "factory methods." Taylor expressed particular concern for the problems of farm tenancy, not merely from an economic standpoint but also for tenancy's sociological impact. Thus the Fairway Plan was born with the dual purpose of correcting both tenancy and operational inefficiency in the West. This plan consolidated abandoned tenant farmland and provided machinery and supervision to the remaining tenant in addition to favorable loan terms so that he could transition into ownership in just a few years. Early success with the plan brought high praise in *Nation's Business* magazine and was held up as a model for other wealthy businessmen to promote in farming communities across the country. The Fairway plan encapsulated the uniquely "American" style of US rural policy, assembled with input from varying levels of government

[23] "President Jardine Tells What's Wrong with Kansas" *Wichita Daily Stockman*, April 20, 1923, 2; William M. Jardine, *A Sound Agricultural Policy for Kansas* (Manhattan: Kansas State University Press, 1922), 35-6, also quoted in Williams, "Jardine," 221.

and the private sector, experimental in design, but no less representative of a larger national goal.[24]

By the mid-1920s, even more creative ideas emerged in Congress to allay the symptoms of agricultural depression. Examples included a bill allowing Rural Free Delivery carriers to transport produce from farm to town on commission, and one to establish "self-supporting agriculture" in areas "adversely affected by the stimulation of wheat production during the war."[25] Designs and critiques came from policymakers of all stripes. "There isn't only one agricultural problem; there are hundreds," Jardine had said in 1925.[26] He committed to bettering the farm situation through educational instruction, but after two years of attempting to combat those problems with his education-based approach, the secretary and the Coolidge administration needed what historian Fred Williams called "a tangible alternative to McNary-Haugenism."[27]

In early 1927, increased pressure brought a host of options in Congress. Bills including McNary-Haugen (H.R. 15474), Crisp (H.R. 15963), and Aswell (H.R. 15655) received much attention and debate, but McNary-Haugen dominated most conversations on farm relief. Cooperative farm organizations favored McNary-Haugen, including the American Farm Bureau Federation, the American Cotton Growers' Exchange, the Corn Belt Federation of Farm Organizations, and Peek's Executive Committee of Twenty-Two North Central States Agricultural Conference, while business interests generally opposed it. This division persisted so clearly, in fact, that leadership in the U.S. Chamber of Commerce spoke out harshly against the bill in *Nation's Business* magazine. Despite opposition, supporters successfully piloted the

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[24] Malcolm Cutting, "Farm Relief by Factory Methods," *Nation's Business* (February, 1930): 47-8. See also analysis in Richard S. Kirkendall, *Social Scientists and Farm Politics in the Age of Roosevelt* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1966), 12.
[25] US Congress, 65th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 65 pt. 4:3462; 3950.
[26] "Jardine Finds Farms Growing in Prosperity," *New York Times,* August 2, 1925, 7.
[27] Williams, "Jardine," 229.

McNary-Haugen bill through Congress in February of 1927. Coolidge vetoed the bill—his first of two vetoes against this plan—with encouragement from both Jardine and Hoover.[28]

Jardine offered his own plan as an alternative, which the Washington, DC *Sunday Star* distilled into four main objectives: "1. Organization of farmers along commodity lines, 2. Public responsibility expressed through a farm board, 3. More adequate economic research and service, and 4. Government credit in the form of a revolving credit fund."[29] Jardine's plan did not become law, however, falling victim to Coolidge's decision against pursuing reelection.

Herbert Hoover made clear his preference for "associationalism" both in his time as secretary of commerce and during his presidency. He preferred government support of voluntary efforts for growth and improvement and undertook this approach in agriculture as he did in other arenas. According to historian Michael Grant, Hoover aimed "to bring the American farmer into line with the nation's modern industrial economy" and promoted both crop diversification and the return of marginal fields to pasture to further this goal.[30] Grant argues that Hoover's efforts, though not always recognized as such, formed the foundation that the New Deal farm program would build on. Joan Wilson made a similarly revisionist argument with her book *Herbert Hoover, Forgotten Progressive*, which emphasized Jeffersonian agrarian ideals in his agriculture policy.[31]

As Hoover entered the White House and began crafting his response to the crisis of depression, major farm organizations prioritized commodity-centric solutions while policymakers in Washington pursued a more multifaceted approach. Hoover saw transportation,

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[28] US Congress, 69th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 68, pt. 2:1726-1733.
[29] "Scope of Jardine Farm-Relief Plan," *Sunday Star,* Washington, D.C., August 21, 1927, 31.
[30] Michael Johnston Grant, *Down and Out On the Family Farm: Rural Rehabilitation in the Great Plains 1929-1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 62.
[31] Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover, Forgotten Progressive,* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1975).

tariff, and international trade policy as critical components of the larger effort to correct the farm problem. He favored surplus control only through voluntary production limits, the reorganization of agricultural marketing on "sounder and more stable . . . lines." To see these ideas enacted, Hoover called Congress into special session, declaring at its opening: "There being no disagreement as to the need of farm relief, the problem before us becomes one of method…I have long held that the multiplicity of causes of agricultural depression could only be met by the creation of a great instrumentality clothed with sufficient authority and resources to assist our farmers to meet these problems."[32]

The resulting Federal Farm Board established by the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1929 represented his ideal solution for the challenges in the industry. Hoover's plan was a voluntary, self-help plan, yet it retained traces of progressive reform seen in earlier efforts. In addition to the loans, stabilization corporations, and price insurance provisions of the act, the board received special powers to investigate and report on overproduction, to promote education, and to pursue acreage reduction in marginal land along with the authority to seek market expansion both domestically and abroad for American agricultural produce.[33]

Hoover's response prompted doubt from some in his cabinet departments. Agricultural economists worried that the new act failed to put agriculture on course for recovery and did not go far enough in addressing the over-plowing problem. M.L. Wilson's experience with the Fairway Plan—combined with his service in USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics—connected him with Howard Tolley and then with Minnesota Congressman Victor Christgau, who proposed a proactive and progressive bill for Regional Adjustments in Agricultural

[32] Herbert Hoover, Opening *Address to Congress*, Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 1st Sess., 1929, 71, pt. 1: 42.
[33] See Joan Hoff Wilson, "Hoover's Agricultural Policies 1921-1928," *Agricultural History* 51, no. 2 (April 1977): 335-361; Agricultural Marketing Act, Pub. L. No. 71-10, 46 Stat. 11 (1929).

Production in 1930. As historian Richard Kirkendall explains, Christgau was the first trained agricultural economist to serve in the US Congress and his bill was produced by these fellow agricultural economists who hoped to enervate the federal response to the agricultural depression, particularly because of their lack of confidence in Hoover's plan.[34]

Kirkendall continues to expand on these progressive legislative efforts by highlighting the influence of BAE member Lewis Cecil Gray. Gray, Kirkendall reveals, fought for scientifically-based government planning to correct deeply rooted ills in American agriculture and rural life. Gray proclaimed that limitless farm expansion

> has been responsible for the fact that our forests have been wastefully sacrificed, our soils needlessly impaired, and the *entire fabric of our rural civilization* has come to manifest serious depreciation. . . . Only by such unity of policy and execution, can ill-considered and excessive expansion and rapid but wasteful utilization be supplanted by deliberate selection, careful economy, and constructive development with due reference to the long-time requirements of the nation. [35]

Gray and other agricultural economists had already begun advocating the resettlement of the rural poor for their own sake and for the preservation of the forests and submarginal land put under plow during the acreage expansion of the First World War. By the time M.L. Wilson proposed his Domestic Allotment Plan, their shared interest proved indisputable. Not only did they hope to ensure factory precision and businesslike efficiency on American farms, they intended to "make rural life more scientific and more democratic as well."[36] This Voluntary Domestic Allotment plan later inspired the major policy framework for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, established in 1933.

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[34] *Cong. Rec.* 71st Cong., 2d Sess., 12119-22 (June 30, 1930). Also see discussion in Kirkendall, *Social Scientists,* 19.
[35] Kirkendall, *Social Scientists*, 21; emphasis added.
[36] Kirkendall, *Social Scientists,* 29; M.L. Wilson and Oscar Jesness, *Farm Relief and the Domestic Allotment Plan* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1933).

Hoover's plan failed to significantly improve the fortunes of the nation's farmers, and Franklin Roosevelt emphasized this failure throughout the 1932 campaign. He claimed the previous administrations "failed utterly to understand the farm problem as a national whole, or to plan for its relief. . . . We must have . . . national planning in agriculture," he declared in his Topeka speech on the farm crisis. Roosevelt then went on to detail his plan, which included reassessing land quality to "correct faulty distribution" of farms in America by returning marginal land to timber. He spoke of a "decentralization of industry" that would repopulate the rural landscape. He promised extension of credit and relief from foreclosure and vowed to rectify the punishing retaliatory tariffs enacted by former trade partners. He vehemently denounced Hoover's plan as "starving out" one third of the farm population while promising "a restored and rehabilitated agriculture."[37]

Roosevelt took office in the midst of global depression, but rural America had already been struggling for over a decade. The new administration and Congress responded first with the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933 (AAA). The act shared some similarities with the McNary-Haugen bill but incorporated the principles of production control formerly anathema to George Peek and the McNary-Haugenites. The act aimed to restore "parity" prices to bring the purchasing power of farmers in line with pre-war levels from 1909-1914. It did so by restricting supply, removing surplus commodities through sale to the secretary of agriculture, and incentivizing acreage reduction with benefit payments. Revenue to fund these payments came from a processing tax automatically implemented upon the declaration of the secretary of

[37] Franklin Roosevelt, Campaign speech in Topeka, KS, September 14, 1932, Master Speech File, box 10, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY.

agriculture. The AAA also included loan provisions and mortgage protections for farmers who continued to face economic hardship.[38]

Certainly the AAA centered on commodity policy. Parity and stability proved paramount goals in its administration. Still, efforts to reshape rural life through the AAA were not limited to the promotion of efficiency and modernization on the farm and ultimately, even this Farm Bill was not exclusively concerned with commodity prices. Before progress could be realized, "American" identity needed cementing and protecting. The Farmers' Holiday movement and emerging agricultural strikes fostered among policymakers a very real fear of agrarian radicalism that New Dealers and conservatives alike hoped to squash. Historian Katherine Jellison finds evidence of this in her examination of farmer and Democratic Congresswoman Virginia E. Jenckes. Like other large landowners, Jellison argues, Jenckes feared the spread of radical activism and wielded New Deal programs like the AAA to soothe and pacify rural families.[39]

New Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace demonstrated similar aims in his response to the dairy uprising. Wisconsin dairymen stood at the forefront of 1930s agrarian radicalism. Milk prices continued to fall, culminating in a series of strikes in February, May, and November, 1933. Farmers dumped milk in the streets, shut down transportation routes, and refused to allow deliveries to processors. When challenged, they sometimes became violent, bombing creameries that remained opened, maiming would-be strikebreakers, and even abusing perceived "scabs" until they committed suicide. Wisconsin Governor Schmedeman called out nearly 2,500 national guardsmen to put down the May strike using bayonets and tear gas bombs,

[38] Fite, *Peek,* 246-53; Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, Pub. L. No. 73-10, 48 Stat. 31 (1933).
[39] Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 77.

and witnesses described scenes of war and anarchy. Hundreds of participants were injured or arrested, and one farmer lost his life as he fell—or was pushed—from a milk truck.[40]

It came as no coincidence that the second strike began the day after Roosevelt signed the Agricultural Adjustment Act into law. Many protestors saw the act as a direct attack on strike efforts and believed that the Secretary of Agriculture intended to undermine the message of dairy strikers through skillful use of AAA authority. Their concerns proved well-founded when he initiated major price increases for fluid milk in the Chicago milkshed, increasing payments to $2.10 per hundredweight. Wisconsin newspapers like the *Manitowoc Herald-Times* were quick to point out his motives, claiming, "[The price increase] . . . was designed . . . to forestall a general outbreak of a producers strike" under headlines that shouted, "Wallace Acts to Hit Strike!"[41]

With the passage of the Federal Emergency Relief Act, reform intentions became even clearer. Here, policymakers encountered challenges providing relief to destitute families in rural communities and began to explore alternative solutions to the rural problem. In 1934 Congress established the Rural Rehabilitation program under the FERA, and with it, Roosevelt's New Deal took direct aim at the lifestyles and living conditions of America's farm families. Rural Rehabilitation represented the combined efforts of federal, state, and private agencies, but this American style neither discredits the program's existence nor reduces its influence on rural life. Under this program, entire colonies were established to remove farmers from relief rolls and retrain them in efforts like soil conservation and production efficiency. These were not

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[40] "Strike Breaker, Criticized, Hangs Self," *The Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison), May 17, 1933; For further analysis of the strikes and conflicts see A. William Hoglund, "Wisconsin Dairy Farmers on Strike," *Agricultural History* 35, no. 1 (Jan 1961): 24-34.

[41] Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, Cong. Rec. 73 1st sess. May 12, 1933, 31; "Wallace Acts to Hit Strike," *Manitowoc Herald-Times,* October 30, 1933, 1.

commodity-based aims; instead, they represented the pursuit of an idealized American farm community with its roots in the earliest days of the republic.

The New Deal aimed not only to remake rural life for farm families, but also to initiate rural living for thousands of so-called "marginal families" through the Subsistence Homestead Division in the Department of the Interior. The effort reflected the ingrained belief that home ownership and family farming helped build a stronger and better America. This division collected families from three categories, "industrial," "stranded," and "rural" and placed them in subsistence homestead communities under thirty year purchase contracts for their individual homesites. It intended to use the rural experience of subsistence farming—supplemented with part-time income outside the home—to correct the social ill of wretched living conditions among lower-income Americans. In "Bulletin 1" leaders outlined the policies and purpose of this new organization, which aimed to "promote economic stability, both individual and national" and to "raise living standards and promote social welfare" by "show[ing] that families can move from poverty-stricken shanties and squalid tenements into decent, modern homes where they may learn a new happiness and achieve a new hope."[42]

A place in the community required that applicants be married, able to work the land, and if not already parents, then at least of an age and situation where children could be expected shortly. Homestead houses were photographed to display beautiful porches inhabited by well-groomed children. Publications with titles like "A Homestead and Hope" printed these images alongside photos of shantytowns, where children ran barefoot, to showcase their success. [43]

[42] US Department of Interior, Division of Subsistence Homesteads, Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation, Washington, DC, "Bulletin 1: Information Concerning the Purposes and Policies of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads," 1933, 3, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD.
[43] Department of the Interior, Division of Subsistence Homesteads. Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation, *A Homestead and Hope,* 1935, 15, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD.

The subsistence homestead program drew its founding authority from the National Industrial Recovery Act and from Roosevelt's Executive Order 6209, which granted the Secretary of Interior the power to "aid in the purchasing of subsistence homesteads."[44] It remained explicitly distinct from the AAA and the FERA, and M.L. Wilson received a direct appointment from President Roosevelt to head the new experiment under Harold Ickes. When critics charged that the program might exacerbate the problem of agricultural surplus, leaders issued ominous warnings that thousands of city people were already fleeing "back to the land" unchecked. Agricultural economists at BAE admonished their detractors that this orderly plan served urban and rural folk alike, writing,

> An unguided mass movement to the land is fraught with the gravest dangers both for the people going out and for the rural communities into which they go. Too often, for example, they are induced to go on poor land because it is cheap, place more children in the rural schools without adding sufficiently to local tax revenues, and finally become relief charges upon the rural community. Careful guidance and direction clearly are needed. European experience, as in Denmark, for example, shows that a properly guided and directed subsistence homestead movement ought not operate adversely to commercial agricultural producers. On the contrary established agriculture as a whole stands to gain from the security and stability afforded the city worker—the chief consumer of agricultural products—by a subsistence homestead.[45]

This program epitomizes the rural and agricultural policies overlooked by scholars who only study the farm bills. If, in the analysis of these scholars, subsistence homesteads did not constitute a direct response to the questions "what kinds of rural communities they wish to promote, what the rural landscape should look like, what land uses should be encouraged, and what rural services should be publicly provided" then surely nothing would.[46]

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[44] Department of the Interior, "Bulletin 1," 9.
[45] Russell Lord and Paul Johnstone, eds., *A Place on Earth: A Critical Appraisal of Subsistence Homesteads* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, 1942), 10, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD.
[46] See discussion in chapter 1: James C. Scott, Foreword to Bill Winders, *The Politics of Food Supply*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xi.

Subsequent reorganization reveals these endeavors even more clearly. Despite having so many programs in place, Roosevelt continued to grapple with ways to streamline relief and address the rural problem more precisely. On May 1, 1935, he issued Executive Order No. 7027, formally creating the Resettlement Administration and appointing Rexford Tugwell—the Undersecretary of Agriculture—as its unpaid Administrator. This order brought Rural Rehabilitation and the Subsistence Homestead Division together under one program. It identified multiple aims for its new administration, including the resettlement of destitute families, the issuing of loans, and, especially, the correction of "soil erosion, seacoast erosion, reforestation, forestation, and flood control."[47] In Roosevelt's commentary, written two years later, the president explained his motives. In 1935, he said, nearly one million families were living in abject poverty on the farm, earning less than $400 per year including the subsistence crops they consumed themselves. Over half of those families lived on what could be fairly termed "sub-marginal farms" or farms physically incapable of producing a workable living. Additionally, nearly half of the families lived as tenants, not as owners, which limited their interest and ability to care for or improve the land. [48]

Roosevelt listed "proper land utilization" as the first aim of the Resettlement administration, with farmer rehabilitation and resettlement appearing second and third respectively. He acknowledged that commodity surplus correction may have reigned first in the minds of voters at the time, but explained, "It was soon recognized, however, that the more important objective of this program of removing the inferior land from continued farming was not the curtailment of production . . . [but] the correction of the sub-marginal living conditions in

[47] Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Rosenman, S. Irving., *The public papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: with a special introduction and explanatory notes by President Roosevelt: 1933-1945* (New York: Random House, 1938), 146.
[48] Roosevelt, *Public Papers,* 146.

these areas."[49] Tugwell described the purpose of the RA in even starker terms. "Such [unproductive] lands made people poor, and poor people made such lands so much worse that they became a national problem."[50] Thus does Franklin Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration reveal the same intentions praised by Peters and Morgan in their examination of Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission from two decades earlier: a vision of agricultural sustainability, and an effort to reshape rural life holistically.

The Resettlement Administration undertook this mission in several ways, first by purchasing sub-marginal land and removing it from cultivation, then by making that land into something of benefit to the American people—whether recreationally through the establishment of National Park sites or through forestry or grazing land—and permanently rehabilitating those families who had been living there. In the northern plains in particular, this program proved highly attractive to struggling farmers drowning in back-taxes. By mid-1936, the Resettlement Administration had optioned two million acres in North and South Dakota and Nebraska.[51]

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[49] Roosevelt, *Public Papers,* 146.

[50] Rexford Tugwell, Subsistence Homestead Files, National Agricultural Library, MS 182, USDA History Collection, Series 1, Box 1.1/10 Folder E4, 1935.

[51] See Michael Johnston Grant, *Down and Out On the Family Farm: Rural Rehabilitation in the Great Plains 1929-1945* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 92. Some historians have written about this government purchase of significant tracts of land under the title "Land Utilization Program" (see Geoff Cunfer, "The New Deal's Land Utilization Program in the Great Plains," *Great Plains Quarterly* 21, no. 3 (Summer 2001): 193-210). This title is not incorrect but it does obscure the complicated administrative control and fragmented nature of a "program" not yet fully formed. Prior to Roosevelt's May 1, 1935 executive order, several different agencies and departments engaged in "land utilization" initiatives all with roots in the 1931 National Conference on Land Utilization. In 1934, the AAA undertook this effort more directly but still lacked unified authority over it. Site selection was done by the AAA within the USDA and by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the National Park Service within Interior, while FERA managed financing and legal execution. Once Roosevelt established the Resettlement Administration, all land utilization efforts were consolidated under RA control and the program became more formalized. In December 1936, the whole endeavor then moved under the jurisdiction of the USDA where it was later transferred internally from the Farm Security Administration to the BAE and then to the Soil Conservation Service; US Department of Agriculture, Agriculture Economic Report, *The Land Utilization Program 1934 to 1936—Origin, Development, and Present Status,* by H. H. Wooten, Open-file report no. 85 (1965), 4-13.

For tenant farmers living on quality land, the administration worked to acquire that land from owners, then helped the tenants become owners with generous lending terms. This latter effort struck a blow against what Roosevelt called the "social problem" of tenancy which, he argued, developed from systemic socio-economic handicaps that required progressive solutions to correct. In addition to the reengagement of land use and owner-tenant relationships, the administration provided all participants with technical instruction in "farm operation . . . home management, and individual budgeting" to prevent relapse into problematic living conditions.[52] The paternalistic overtones of this program did not escape notice of its would-be clients. In fact, invasive oversight of their new farms by "government men" proved one of the chief complaints from residents in Resettlement communities like Dyess and Hillsong. Their complaints help illustrate the fervor with which New Dealers and local bureaucrats pursued complete rural metamorphosis.[53]

Rural reform efforts targeted more than just those on marginal lands. Any farm family living below the socially acceptable standard encountered policies designed to improve its lifestyle and farm practices. On May 11, 1935, Roosevelt issued Executive Order No. 7037, which officially established the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), and a year later, Congress passed the Rural Electrification Act, extending Roosevelt's program for another decade. This organization dramatically changed rural life in America. Farmers called it a revolution, while headlines trumpeted the innovation it inspired: "With Light and Power Comes Desire for Better Things; Farmers Sprucing Up Homes to Meet Modern Pace," they claimed, and

[52] Grant, *Down and Out,* 152-3.
[53] For a thorough examination of life at the Dyess Colony and other resettlement projects see Fred C. Smith, *Trouble in Goshen: Plain Folk, Roosevelt, Jesus, and Marx in the Great Depression South* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

"Rural Power Lines Open New Life to Farmers." Congressmen and rural families alike invoked the aims of the Country Life Commission when they emphasized the significant role electricity played in stemming the flow of young people from the farm to the city.[54]

In her work, *Every Farm a Factory,* Deborah Fitzgerald comments on the REA's efforts to "modernize and industrialize" American agriculture. Invoking the same sentiments visible in farmer interviews, she writes about the importance of equalizing the quality of life from city to countryside, but also highlights the obligation brought about by rural electrification. "Now the barn not only could be electrified, it should be electrified." Fitzgerald wrote. "Modernity and mechanization, once so foreign to rural families, were delivered by the New Deal programs, and the opportunities, it turned out, were also responsibilities."[55]

Official statements and media depictions of the REA program support Fitzgerald's assertion, not only in hindsight, but in contemporaneous understanding as well. Second REA Administrator John M. Carmody—sometimes called farmers' "electrical Santa"—championed farmer organization and self-help as the ideal method for bringing power to far flung communities under the act. The legal requirements proved no small obstacle, and farmers often turned to their county agricultural agents for assistance as they sought to participate. Carmody intended exactly this approach. He even went so far as to declare that the program's co-op structure functioned primarily to train farmers in better management, more efficient operation,

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[54] John Carmody, "Rural Electrification by the Government Bringing New Horizons to the Farmer," *The Central New Jersey Home News* (New Brunswick, NJ), January 23, 1938, 7. Robert Hewett, "Farmers Get Light as Private Utilities Fight Co-Op" *Decatur Sunday Herald,* September 12, 1937, 11. *Cong. Rec.*, 74th Cong., 2d sess., 1936, 80, pt. 7: 7840.

[55] Deborah Kay Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory : The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture*, Yale Agrarian Studies Series (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 185.

and more profitable marketing, and indeed to usher in a wholly modern, more stable agriculture. Only secondarily did it aim to improve living conditions and economic position.[56]

Given the challenges associated with organizing and the legal requirements determined by the states, the REA undertook extensive education and propaganda efforts to encourage necessary farmer participation in the program. Pamphlets like *Electrifying your Farm and Home* printed mock-resumés of "the new handyman," Mr. Electricity. It vividly described the "drudgery" of farm life and asked farm wives, "are you working for your home or is your home working for you?", while enticing them with photos of comfortable, smiling families enjoying modern electrical conveniences. Other publications provided a primer in the basics, defining kilowatt-hours and clarifying loan availability while accompanying infographics highlighted the percentage of American farms that remained "behind the times."[57]

The REA made slow progress in its early days and, anxious to speed adoption of electrification, leaders turned to a model they knew well from USDA and cooperative extension, that of the demonstration agent. Louisan Mamer proved the ideal woman for this job. A former farm girl herself, Mamer previously completed studies in Home Economics at the University of Illinois and worked briefly for the TVA. After joining REA, she quickly became its most visible representative to families across rural American with her traveling "Electric Circus." At these shows, Mamer presented a variety of labor-saving devices and demonstrated methods of electrical cooking to audiences who had never before seen such spectacles. Mamer impressed

[56] US Department of Agriculture, *Rural Lines – USA: The Story of the Rural Electrification Administration's First Twenty-five Years, 1935-1960* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, January, 1960), 10-11; John Carmody, "Rural Electrification by the Government Bringing New Horizons to the Farmer," *The Central New Jersey Home News* (New Brunswick, NJ), January 23, 1938, 7.
[57] Rural Electrification Administration, *Electrifying your Farm and Home* (Washington, DC: Rural Electrification Administration, 1936), 2-4; Rural Electrification Administration, *What Every Farm Leader Should Know About Rural Electrification* (Washington, DC: Rural Electrification Administration, 1935).

attendees with incredible sights and samples that she hoped would encourage their imitation. At one Easter show she spread a fantastic table, carving turnips and carrots into holiday calla lilies while her electric roaster prepared the ham and sweet potatoes.[58]

Her annotated talking points claimed that electrification could increase milk and meat production by forty-five percent and egg and poultry production by fifteen percent. Her calculations also asserted that electric lighting provided the equivalent of 182 additional eight hour workdays per year on the farm and concluded that "the importance of good lighting can hardly be over-emphasized."[59] Mamer personified the aspirational reform of the Rural Electrification Administration, and found an audience with which she could easily connect, given their shared history.

The modernization heralded by policymakers did not affect all rural lives equally. Katherine Jellison examines the disparate impact of these types of initiatives in her 1993 work, "Entitled to Power," drawing her title from a 1930s advertisement for washing machines. The Maytag sketch admonished farmers for their willingness to invest in mechanized technology for their own farm work while neglecting to upgrade their wives' working conditions. The ad quipped, "Farm women are also entitled to power." Jellison finds double meaning in this, and seeks to uncover the relative power and experience of women working in the highly gendered farm community.[60]

Jellison notes that this period saw an increase in advertising of domestic machinery and a general trend among extension services to push for modernization, but she argues, this advocacy

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[58] "Easter Menus are Featured at Cook Class," *Beatrice Daily Sun* (Beatrice Nebraska), April 14, 1938, 1.
[59] Louisan E. Mamer, Training Outline: Farm, Home and School Lighting, Series 1, Box 3, Folder 1, Louisan E. Mamer Rural Electrification Administration Papers, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.
[60] Katherine Jellison, *Entitled to Power: Farm Women and Technology, 1913-1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 116.

often completely failed to understand the true position of farm women in a heavily patriarchal environment. The widespread purchase of expensive equipment for household chores could not occur without a sharp increase in the "economic and political power [of women] within the farm family."[61]

According to Jellison, World War II brought more women into the field, and the postwar period prompted the kind of domestic modernization the Country Life movement had pushed for half a century earlier. When this occurred, it did not result in the further domestication of the farm woman. Rather than utilizing their newly freed time to focus on their role as housewives, many women headed out to the fields. As an article in *Wallace's Farmer* explained, with pie and casserole in the freezer, "a great many women hours are spent each year on tractors [and] trips to town for repairs for all the new machinery."[62] Throughout their course of household modernization, women were able to steer their lives to maintain and increase their role as farm producers. In some ways their new roles reflected the goals of the early reformers. They became active consumers, increasing their purchasing power and utilizing a great deal of modern household appliances. In other ways, however, they departed from the aims of the Country Life movement and elected to take control of their own participation in farm operations. Far from being edged out of their field contributions, they utilized farm technology as a means to broaden their participation in their family farm businesses.

In the final iterations of the New Deal for agriculture, the strong progressive inclination among policymakers to reshape rural life remained paramount. Jess Gilbert's *Planning Democracy: Agrarian Intellectuals and the Intended New Deal* captures these efforts

[61] Jellison, *Entitled to Power*, 64.
[62] "What Does She Do with Her Time?" *Wallace's Farmer,* 21 March 1953, 51, in Jellison, *Entitled to Power, 164.*

masterfully. Gilbert examines M.L. Wilson's "Theory of Agricultural Democracy" as a driving force behind much of the agricultural policy of the New Deal, particularly in the later years. He points out that Wilson and other agrarian intellectuals at USDA believed "full democracy had yet to be achieved" and that the ongoing aim of policy efforts should be to help foster its growth and development. This held true not just for the end of the 1930s but through the coming war and beyond it as well.[63]

In the later part of the decade, the USDA began holding "Schools of Philosophy for Agricultural Leaders" which strove to connect work in agriculture with lofty democratic ideals and ideological forebearers. After piloting the school model in Washington, DC, the department took it into the field where it partnered with state extension directors to host local meetings. The schools stretched over four or five consecutive days at sites selected and funded by the state organizations. The federal department covered the cost of lecturers which local leaders were allowed to select from a provided list, but attendees had to pay their own cost of attendance or seek funding from their state extension office. Schools were held across the country often with specific audiences in mind. The program list for 1941 included schools designed specifically for African American rural leaders near Tuskegee, for rural librarians in Michigan, for farm people in Iowa, and for town people in Provo, Utah. Instructions to school leaders encouraged the use of discussion sessions to identify which concepts attendees struggled to grasp. They also reminded lecturers that, while their expertise in social theory was paramount, discussions could open up

[63] Jess Gilbert, *Planning Democracy: Agrarian Intellectuals and the Intended New Deal* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 16.

new connections between such ideas and the lived rural experience, which in turn could reveal new fields of study for school leaders.[64]

A typical program for the four-day school began with the question "What is a Desirable National Agricultural Program?" The first day included lectures on philosophical foundations and the current agricultural situation, and attached lecture outlines detailed the philosophy of Kant and Rousseau and lauded Jeffersonian agrarian democracy above all.[65] Day two concerned the place of government in modern society, with lectures on "Individualism, Democracy, and Social Control." Subsequent days covered agriculture policy, trade, and nationalism. The final day brought the conversation back to its philosophical origins by asking what made "a more abundant rural life." Lecture outlines for day five emphasized elevating standards of living and redistributing "social income" to establish greater equitability in agriculture. In this way, the USDA took their policy message of progressive agrarian idealism directly to the American people.[66]

In 1937 Roosevelt's reform agenda continued to gain strength with the passage of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and the establishment of the Farm Security Administration. In February of that year, Roosevelt delivered a message to Congress emphasizing the ongoing land tenure crisis in the United States and providing the report of his Special Committee on Farm Tenancy. The report found that rates of tenancy had increased sharply from twenty-five percent

[64] Agricultural Adjustment Administration Division of Program Planning, "Schools of Philosophy for Agricultural Leaders" MS 182, USDA History Collection, Series I, Box 1.1/9 Folder 9, National Agricultural Library.
[65] Agricultural Adjustment Administration Division of Program Planning, "Schools of Philosophy for Agricultural Leaders" MS 182, USDA History Collection, Series I, Box 1.1/9 Folder 9, National Agricultural Library.
[66] Carl Taeusch, Agricultural Adjustment Administration Division of Program Planning, "Schools for Extension Workers" MS 182, USDA History Collection, Series I, Box 1.1/9 Folder 9A, National Agricultural Library.

of farmers in 1880 to forty-two percent in 1935. Such unreliable tenure patterns, it argued, increased rates of rural poverty and decreased stability in rural life. "This social erosion," the committee warned, "not only wears down the fiber of the families themselves; it saps the resources of the entire social order."[67] Committee members recommended direct federal intervention in land tenure on the grounds that the existing system was a man-made problem that required a man-made solution. Their report outlined a program of credit and rehabilitation under the direction of the Secretary of Agriculture that mirrored and expanded the work done by the Resettlement Administration.

The resulting Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act went a long way in promoting these aims. It provided rehabilitation loans for livestock, equipment, and supply purchases and for the subsistence of the farm family with interest rates capped at three percent annually. It also established loans for tenant land purchases with forty year repayment terms. The Farm Security Administration (FSA)—established within the USDA just over one month later—assumed responsibility for administering these Title III loans and took control over all projects formerly conducted by the Resettlement Administration, which it absorbed. According to historian Jess Gilbert, "over the next five years the FSA became one of the largest, most radical, and least racist of federal entities. It functioned effectively as a 'poor man's Department of Agriculture.'"[68]

The Farm Security Administration faced a daunting task but trained employees to pursue its goal as a kind of mission. Its philosophically-styled introductory text, *Toward Farm Security,* immersed FSA workers in the agrarian idealism of Thomas Jefferson juxtaposed against the

[67] US Congress, House Committee on Agriculture, *Message from the President of the United States Transmitting the Report of the Special Committee on Farm Tenancy* 75th Cong., 1st sess., 1937, H. Doc. 149, 2,7.
[68] Gilbert, *Planning Democracy,* 88.

crushing rural poverty and starvation of the 1930s countryside. It warned of distressed farmers who turned to rural radicalism in the late nineteenth century and admonished FSA employees and citizens alike, "It is not for the good of our country, and not for the good of our democracy, that extreme poverty should continue in rural areas of this country. Socially it is not good, politically it is not good, and economically it is bad to have a vast portion of our population without purchasing power, poorly nourished, poorly housed, poorly clothed, or poorly educated."[69]

Many farmers themselves agreed. In 1938, Oklahoma dirt farmer G. M. Boyd wrote to Senator Elmer Thomas to express the same concerns. He explained,

> [I] am working 320 acres of farm land make good crops every year but haven't made expences since 28. . . . I will 71 years old in next month have no expencive habits don't drink nor gamble only with the weather and grass hoppers haven't bought a new car since 24 don't know what a vacaion is only by reading about some taking them. . . . I am writing you what twenty million farmers are thinking, right now the situation is charged with nitro, just takes a light jar to set it off. . . . This thing has turned thousands of good men out in the section . . . destroying citizenship making beggars and bums out of once free men. As for myself I wont be here verry mutch longer . . . but I have four boys. . . . not only them but the neighbors boys and tens of thousands of them all over this fair land that hasent got any more chance then a yard dog. I am asking you in all sincerity to do something about it before it is to late.[70]

Boyd expressed fear for his family's financial situation, certainly, but he also demonstrated concern for the citizenship and political unrest sweeping the countryside. He echoed the apprehensions of policymakers and FSA workers that poor living conditions on the farm could ignite a problem much larger in scope than the suffering of individual family members. In his

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[69] US Department of Agriculture, *Toward Farm Security: The Problem of Rural Poverty and the Work of the Farm Security Administration,* by Joseph Gaer (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 57.

[70] This excerpt is reproduced with all errors original to the manuscript to help illuminate the experiences of farmers at the time. Letter from G. M. Boyd to Elmer Thomas, Box 28, Folder 10, Elmer Thomas Collection, Congressional Archives, Carl Albert Center, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma.

own words, Boyd connected successful participation in democracy to the farmer's ability to live satisfactorily on the land.

In its first three years of operation, the Farm Security Administration received hundreds of thousands of loan applications from farmers like Boyd, facing destitution. During that period, the agency provided loans to approximately 15,700 families, estimating approximately twenty applicants for each available loan. The FSA oversaw resettlement projects of entire rural communities and scattered farmsteads alike. It also aided thousands of tenants in purchasing the land they were already working. It enrolled 300,000 individuals in FSA-sponsored medical care associations to promote better access to rural healthcare, and built migratory labor camps, which provided shelter, healthcare, community facilities, and childcare to displaced agricultural laborers.[71]

The Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act and the Farm Security Administration targeted the whole of the rural life experience in America. Despite limited funding and Congressional vacillation, these aimed at nothing less than an entirely rebuilt and thriving countryside, dotted with family farms. FSA leaders believed anything less threatened the nation itself. If agriculture could no longer provide that democratizing connection to the land that so filled Jefferson with hope, then, the Farm Security Administration text warned, "an American ideal would be lost."[72]

By November 1940 new Agriculture Secretary Claude Wickard traveled the country invoking that imperative of democracy against the rising threat of Hitler and the "totalitarian scheme." Speaking to the annual meeting of the National Grange, he said, "Thinking is contagious," before outlining the efforts of USDA and the land-grant colleges to produce study

[71] US Farm Security Administration, *How the Farm Security Administration is Helping Needy Farm Families* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 11-14.
[72] US Farm Security Administration, *How the Farm Security Administration is Helping Needy Farm Families*, 56.

materials for farmers on the history of democratic thought. Wickard called on the Grange members to use their collective experience in conservation districts and county planning committees to bring about "the democratic reinforcement of the weakest points in the economy and the morale of our democracy." He declared the existing farm programs "the modern expression of our democracy" and exhorted attendees toward "a unified effort to make democracy come more completely true for the disadvantaged in agriculture."[73]

When war came to the United States a year later, the policy groundwork had long since been laid to enlist farmers in the fight for democracy and American identity. Even during the years of "normalcy" policymakers found ways to incentivize and enable the transition from tenant to owner to bring rural life more into keeping with the Jeffersonian ideal. Every New Deal program that touched agriculture—Subsistence Homesteads, Rural Resettlement, the Farm Security Administration, AAA, and Rural Electrification—worked to remind farm families of their hallowed place in America's national character, in ways both honorific and patronizing. Alongside earlier counterparts like cooperative extension and rural free delivery, these programs undergird a significant rural policy agenda, made no less real by their enactment through the democratic process of conflict and compromise.

[73] Claude R. Wickard, Speech before Annual Meeting of the National Grange , Syracuse NY, November 15th 1940, MS 182, USDA History Collection, Series I, Box 1.2/1 Folder IA2c1, National Agricultural Library.

CHAPTER 4: AGRICULTURE AT WAR AGAIN

Despite years of dedicated intervention, serious challenges continued to blanket the American countryside at the end of the 1930s, in arenas both economic and social. Farm organizations that had fought hard against New Deal agriculture policies began shifting toward more conciliatory messages. Some even outright embraced the programs they had lobbied against in the face of their ongoing struggles. Members of the Corn Belt Liberty League—a strongly anti-New Deal group from Illinois who often called the president's farm program "Stalinism"—went so far as to call for government mandated corn sales through the implementation of the new alcohol-blended gasoline concept.[1] Franklin Roosevelt's "bold, persistent experimentation" in agriculture set a new standard for the kinds of programs America's farmers would demand from their leaders, but those programs bore much in common with the ideals espoused by the founders in the days of the early republic, and maintained much continuity with the reformers of the early twentieth century as well.[2]

The coming war would cement those connections ever more deeply. If the New Deal pursued and expanded the vision of rural reform sketched out by Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, the Second World War solidified that vision as a permanent fixture in US agricultural policy. Long before the US entered the conflict, officials in the administration and at USDA began planning for the role of agriculture within it. Their efforts would establish a baseline—a standard for rural life upon which all future intervention would be measured. That baseline came to exist not only in the minds of the USDA leaders who worked to implement it,

[1] Floyd Brackney, "Opportunity to Increase Corn Price—Alcohol Blended Gasoline Will Consume Entire Corn Surplus," *American Liberty Magazine,* December 22, 1938, 1, Ruebush-Goodpasture Collection, Special Collections, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL.
[2] Franklin D. Roosevelt, Address at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia, May 22, 1932, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-oglethorpe-university-atlanta-georgia.

but in the minds of American farmers themselves, who—through the course of the war—became fully invested in the model, both by their personal experience of it, and through USDA's extensive propaganda campaign.

In September 1939, Secretary Wallace took the first steps toward marshalling agriculture into war service when he called together a collection of farmers, organizations, processors, distributors, labor representatives, and members of the public to form Roosevelt's Agricultural Advisory Council. A USDA press release described the council's purpose, explaining that it would "assist in the formulation of policies to deal with the situation brought about by the outbreak of war in Europe." Council members aimed to meet the complications in agriculture that might arise during wartime, while publicly holding firm to the isolationist position of the nation at the time. [3]

According to councilmember and former Alabama governor Bibb Graves, "All Americans want to keep this country out of war. We are confident that the United States will remain at peace but we recognize the difficulties which foreign wars present to our domestic economy . . . consumers need have no fear of shortage or runaway prices. Such advances in farm prices as may occur will tend to restore the balance between farm and city prices and help to bring about normal business and employment."[4] Graves went on to extol the progress in American agriculture since the previous war and to reassure the public that the nation was much better prepared from an agricultural standpoint than it had been in the previous war. The committee also carefully emphasized that any plan for agriculture in the context of this war

[3] US Department of Agriculture Press Release 415-40, September 5, 1939, printed in Gladys Baker and Wayne Rasmussen, *Chronology of the War Food Administration including predecessor and successor agencies* (Washington, DC: USDA BAE, November 1950), USDA History Collection, Series I, subseries 2 Box 1.2/37, Folder IX D2, 2, National Agricultural Library.
[4] "Graves Sees War bringing Farm-City Price Balance," *The South Alabamian* (Jackson, AL), October 18, 1939, 1.

would proceed on a voluntary basis, and most members spoke against a recreation of the World War I era Food Administration.[5]

As months passed, the council met several times to discuss and plan for potential disruption to the American agricultural sector while continuing to utilize isolationist language publicly. Fractures in the council appeared early on—given the many competing interests represented—and by August 1940, National Farmer's Union President John Vesecky wrote to his farmers that even with his ongoing participation, "the Agricultural Advisory Council *is not* the organization that will be in the best position [to secure farm cooperation in a national defense emergency]."[6]

While the Agricultural Advisory Council gradually unraveled, Roosevelt worked to secure a more direct integration of agricultural concerns into military preparedness. On May 16, 1940, he delivered an impassioned speech to Congress seeking significant appropriations for national defense. Following that speech, he appointed a seven member advisory commission to the Council on National Defense which consisted of the Secretaries of War, Navy, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, and Labor. The Advisory Commission included an agricultural division headed by Chester C. Davis, and with it, Roosevelt hoped to provide the framework for wartime agriculture policy moving forward.[7]

Davis, however, would not find his division endowed with the necessary authority to pursue defense preparedness in the farm sector. He confronted the new Agriculture Secretary,

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[5] Gladys Baker, *Century of service: The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1963), 275.
[6] John Vesecky, "President's Message" *The National Union Farmer,* August 9, 1049, 3.
[7] Franklin D. Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 1940), 205; Baker and Rasmussen, *Chronology of the War Food Administration* USDA BAE, November 1950, USDA History Collection, Series I, subseries 2 Box 1.2/37, Folder IX D2, 2, National Agricultural Library.

Claude R. Wickard, about the division's lack of power and wrote memoranda to the president insisting that the Food Administration be placed wholly under his control, or under USDA's. Wickard looked upon the group—and the Office of Production Management—with suspicion. The secretary was wary of ceding any potential wartime authority and launched a pamphlet campaign to highlight USDA's contributions to the defense effort. Wickard then utilized his knowledge of Roosevelt's farm perspective to advocate for the placement of the wartime food and farm program firmly within the jurisdiction of USDA.[8]

Despite this clamoring for wartime preparation, isolationist ideology continued to play a major role in shaping US agriculture policy both toward American farmers directly, and in the development of agricultural trade relationships abroad. At the outset of war abroad, policymakers quickly recognized the disastrous effect of the conflict on agricultural exports, noting that trade restrictions from Germany and Italy moved beyond mere protectionism and marked a shift toward self-sufficiency for purposes of military readiness. Wary of declining European markets—and admittedly fearful of a potential Axis victory—leaders at USDA chose to refocus on a policy of the possible, and worked to reshape trade relationships in Latin America. They called for "Hemisphere Solidarity" and cautioned that Latin America could be susceptible to Axis threats. They also echoed concerns that constricting global trade could result in Latin American farmers directly competing with American growers. So, in the words of journalist L. B. Skeffington, instead of sending representatives across the world to bring back specimens as it had for so long, the Department of Agriculture utilized her "plant explorers . . . to enrich the agriculture of other countries."[9] The USDA was going on the offensive.

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[8] See Dean Albertson chapter "I have Arrived at Some Decisions" in *Roosevelt's Farmer* for extensive coverage of these exchanges, Dean Albertson, *Roosevelt's Farmer: Claude R. Wickard in the New Deal* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1961).
[9] L.B. Skeffington, "Farming Facts" *The Ithaca Journal,* January 22, 1941.

Representatives of the department proposed to expand US intervention nearby under the legacy of the Monroe Doctrine by identifying and promoting targeted agricultural products in Latin American countries that could not be grown domestically. The intervention plan centered on rubber, a product then purchased almost entirely from the Netherlands Indies and British Malaya.[10] Vice President Wallace had advocated for US-supported rubber expansion in Latin America beginning in 1935, and the emergency of war provided additional justification for his cause. USDA sent four parties of advisors to examine possible rubber sites and partnered with Goodyear to showcase the company's experimental rubber plantations in both Costa Rica and Panama. [11]

Once established, the rubber could be purchased by the United States without fear of harm to US farmers. In this way, the "good neighbors" to the South would not present economic competition but could still profit through agricultural exports to the US. Officials hoped that Latin America would use the revenue to purchase manufactured goods made in the US, thus closing the trade circle. By focusing on rubber, quinine, and tea, they also hoped to protect the US from potential wartime shortages as conflict in the Pacific expanded. Such international intervention by the USDA demonstrated its aim of promoting democratization and industrial capitalism, while enlisting agriculture in military service not only among American farmers, but across the hemisphere at large.

Efforts abroad, however, did not lessen the commitment to similar improvements at home. For four years the Farm Security Administration (FSA) had been working to secure these aims among impoverished and "insecure" farmers in the United States. The outbreak of war in

[10] D.F. Christy, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations "The Impact of War and the Defense Program on American Agriculture," (lecture, Purdue University, January 15, 1941), NDSU Archives.
[11] Edward Stuntz, "Wallace Says Industry to Save Latin America," *Clarion Ledger* (Jackson, MI), March 2, 1941, 26.

Europe only served to further convince FSA officials of the necessity of their cause. Many at USDA looked to the FSA to preemptively address worsening wartime conditions among these most vulnerable farmers. Raymond Smith of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) spoke at length on the subject in December 1940, calling intervention "a second line of defense." Without a program of support for marginal, export-focused farmers, he warned, American families would slip further below the standard of living "compatible with American democracy," a standard increasingly important as a foil to the living conditions found in totalitarian regimes abroad. Smith advocated for a retooling of both the AAA and the Soil Conservation Service to focus more directly on the needs of impoverished farm families. Additionally, he proposed the establishment of a Rural Conservation Works program in an effort to strengthen rural "human resources."[12] Utilizing the same language, the 1941 report of the FSA administrator, C. B. Baldwin, bemoaned the reality that impoverished farmers lacked a stake in democracy. He cautioned that without economic justice and a sense of belonging, they had no incentive to support or defend their country against aggressors.[13]

The FSA had grown significantly from its inception and, by the 1941 report, oversaw offices in every state. The administration's largest focus remained the rehabilitation program, through which struggling families received assistance and instruction on how to better their operations. Rehabilitation partnered each family with a Farm Security Supervisor who trained them in the three key areas of (1) home production of food and feed, (2) development of at least two marketable goods, and (3) preservation of soil fertility. This program aimed to secure FSA's stated goal of "help[ing] needy and handicapped farm families get back on their own feet, and,

[12] Raymond C. Smith, Speech to annual meeting of the American Farm Economics Association (New Orleans, LA, December 27, 1940), Ser. 1 Box 1.2/3 Folder IB2c, National Agricultural Library.
[13] C. B. Baldwin, *Report of the Administrator of the Farm Security Administration* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941), 2.

under their own power, develop into independent, taxpaying citizens." Above all, FSA worked to build "a stronger rural America." It reported successful progress toward "permanent rehabilitation" and self-sufficiency by the majority of its more than 900,000 participating families. According to Baldwin, this progress represented "the highly important salvage of rural people themselves, and of their health and their self-confidence, of their abilities and ambition." Each of these, he argued, "contribute in a large measure to the strength of our democracy." The work of the FSA demonstrated little interest in commodity markets. Instead, the administration strove to remake rural life in America, to address and restore rural health, and to build functioning rural communities for the sake of the nation and the well-being of its citizens. [14]

As is often the case in the history of US policymaking, conflict over these decisions abounded. Wickard faced infighting among stakeholders to such a degree that he listed the frequent squabbles as point number five on his sixteen point outline of farm problems in 1941; points six and seven included "fighting each other" and "constant bickering" respectively. Farm Bureau Federation leaders came to vehemently oppose the ongoing efforts of the FSA, and hostility between the two groups and their respective supporters bordered on vitriolic during this period. To imagine a truly universal policy agenda here—or indeed anywhere in American history—is folly. Still, Wickard understood the priorities of the administration and fought to bring them about.[15]

In a speech at the Farm and Home Week convocation at Purdue University on January 15, 1941, the secretary sketched his approach to "agricultural preparedness."[16] He spoke of a responsibility shared by all to assist underprivileged farmers. He vowed to marshal the resources

[14] Baldwin, *Report*, 8; 7; 27.
[15] Claude Wickard, "Memo," reprinted in Albertson, *Roosevelt's Farmer*, 186; Orville Kile, *The Farm Bureau Through Three Decades* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1948), 292.
[16] Claude Wickard, Speech, *Cong. Rec.*, 77th Cong., 1st sess., 1941, pt. 10: A441.

of the land grant colleges, the extension service, the AAA, and farm organizations to disseminate accurate and useful information to help farmers make informed decisions for their operations. Most significantly, he laid out his plan for "agricultural adjustment" pursuing Roosevelt's aim of "freedom from want." By supporting food self-sufficiency on the farm and improved diets nationwide, Wickard hoped to correct much of what ailed both agriculture, and the nation. One month later, he crafted these ideas into the memo that Dean Albertson would call—excepting the secretary's commitment to rural electrification and soil conservation—"his entire farm policy." That Wickard faced regular criticism and even outright hostility from opponents like the Farm Bureau does not invalidate the existence of this policy, but rather reveals its quintessentially American nature.[17]

Progress in agriculture remained a significant focus in the national defense and readiness conversation throughout 1941. In March, President Roosevelt took to the airwaves to honor the eighth anniversary of his farm program initiative and to herald the American farmer as a key component of his national defense strategy. "The farm front is ready for any demand of total defense," he declared. Roosevelt linked this preparedness directly to his farm program—though he took pains to paint it as belonging to farmers themselves.

> American agriculture is in splendid condition to play its full part in the program of National Defense. Our granaries are full. Our stores of food and fiber are adequate to meet our own needs at home—yes, and the needs of our friends in the other lands now fighting for their existence—fighting in behalf of all Democratic forms of government, fighting against world control by dictatorships… The farm front is a broad one but national programs for agriculture touch every part of this front, in every part of the land. Six million farmers cooperating in these national programs are helping to give the answer to those who question the future of Democracy.[18]

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[17] Claude Wickard, Speech, *Cong. Rec.*, 77th Cong., 1st sess., 1941, pt. 10: A441; Albertson, *Roosevelt's Farmer*, 188.

[18] Franklin Roosevelt, "The Farm Front is Ready for any Demand of Total Defense" March 8, 1941 radio address, in Franklin Roosevelt, *The Public Papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (New York: Random House, 1941), 44.

Roosevelt consistently presented American farmers working within his agricultural policy as warriors for democracy. He contrasted the US farm situation at the onset of World War II with that in 1914 and labeled his farm policies "shock absorbers for agriculture." He planned to rally this system to yield the highest levels of agricultural production the nation had ever seen. Roosevelt realized the demand for American food and fiber would be great, both at home and among our allies. The very day of the radio address, the Senate voted to pass the Lend-Lease bill which became law a few days later. In the three months from the act's passage to the end of May, the United States Department of Agriculture delivered $7,998,261.67 of agricultural "defense articles" under Lend-Lease—surpassing the total value of goods delivered by the Department of the Navy during the same time period.[19]

On May 5, 1941, Roosevelt took another step toward aligning his agricultural policy with wartime needs when he wrote to Secretary Wickard requesting the establishment of an Office of Agricultural Defense Relations under the authority of the USDA. Formally created on May 17, this office transferred the responsibilities previously belonging to the National Defense Advisory Commission's Division of Agriculture "with the aim of further strengthening the emergency organization for defense [by having] these special defense activities…brought closer to the established agricultural programs of the Government."[20] Clearly, Roosevelt intended to rely on the infrastructure and relationships of the USDA to shape American agriculture as the demands of war grew more pressing.

Given the immensity of the growing conflict and the need for rapid defense mobilization, Wickard's USDA found itself called upon to do far more than merely guide American farmers to

[19] *Report to Congress on Lend-Lease Operations: First Report under the Act of March 11, 1941* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 7.
[20] Franklin D. Roosevelt, letter to Agriculture Secretary Claude R. Wickard, in *Handbook: Office for Emergency Management: Functions and Administration*, (Washington, DC: GPO, 1941), 70.

increased food production. The Farm Security Administration—working to maintain its independence and funding amidst significant departmental power struggles—took on the massive task of aiding the national defense program by relocating farm families displaced by federal defense land purchases. Defense work, FSA leaders hoped, might help rally support for their cause and provide for the continuation of the rehabilitation work they considered so vital to American democracy. From the outbreak of war to May 1941, the US government purchased or leased over four million acres of land for defense development purposes that ranged from maneuver areas to powder plants to bombing fields and anti-aircraft firing ranges. This left well over six thousand families—by the lowest estimates—homeless on short notice. [21]

Camp Stewart, Georgia, alone displaced over 800 families from 360,000 acres and it was far from unusual. The majority of the projects removed several hundred farm families each. Beyond this initial crisis, the removal of families from defense project sites often resulted in what the FSA called "secondary displacement" which occurred when the removed family purchased land elsewhere from a landlord who then displaced his existing tenants. In one example, 95 families removed from Ravenna, Ohio, resulted in 41 secondary displacements when they moved to new homes. Years of experience with resettlement and rehabilitation projects, combined with the reality that most displaced families came from low-income farms, made the Farm Security Administration a natural fit to tackle this challenge.[22]

In the event of a new defense land purchase, FSA conducted a survey of the land to identify the families facing displacement and determine their assistance needs. Then, the

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[21] See Sidney Baldwin, *Poverty and Politics: The Rise and Decline of the Farm Security Administration* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968) for a thorough discussion of the aims and challenges faced by the FSA; "FSA and the Defense Program" Internal Departmental Memo, March 6, 1941, USDA History Collection, Series 1 box 1.2/1 Folder Ia2c1, National Agricultural Library.
[22] "FSA and the Defense Program*,"* 1, 5.

administration established local relocation offices which provided information on available land and support for leases and purchases. In some cases, the FSA also provided temporary housing as a stopgap measure both for displaced families and for defense workers. Additional support took the form of cash grants for moving and subsistence expenses, operating loans, livestock boarding assistance, and even general education.

Above all, the administration sought to use this transition to continue its promotion of "modern, well-balanced farming operations" that aligned with the goals of a modernized and defense-ready nation. Where emerging defense industries provided lucrative employment opportunities off the land, FSA representatives stood resolutely in support of the agrarian ideal and emphasized "the long term advantages of continuing efficient operation of the family's farm." Their proactive role in the resettlement of families displaced by defense projects provided yet another avenue to reshape rural life and farming practice in America. [23]

Underlying the department's fears about displaced farmers was the massive objective of increased production. Predicted shortages in certain crops and livestock proved most immediately concerning for defense and preparedness. In the spring of 1941, Secretary Wickard implemented several policy changes to help incentivize production increases, including guaranteed price floors on hogs, dairy, chickens, and eggs at levels well above market value. He also adjusted conservation requirements to allow for increased plantings in peanuts, tomatoes, corn, peas, and beans without the loss of conservation benefit payments. To ensure the nation's ability to meet this huge demand, 7,000,000 American farmers received production questionnaires from their County Agents for the 1942 season. Agents advocated for production increases based on goals set by the USDA. Respondents then completed a "plan sheet" which

[23] "FSA and the Defense Program," 4.

followed the format used by the AAA but increased its scope to include "the acreage of every crop, the breeding of all animals or fowl, and the production of milk" on the farm. This plan would be exhaustive.[24]

The role of the county agent was multifaceted in the program. He needed not only to secure participation in the survey, but also to persuade his farmers to bring their operations in line with national defense and wartime goals. In many states, farmers were asked to reduce wheat or cotton to allow for increases in meat and dairy. When a farmer balked at such meddling, the agent then had to demonstrate how the farmer might cooperate without any loss of income. Once the plans were settled and the data gathered, agents transmitted the numbers to state councils who forwarded the totals to Washington.[25]

This massive project rallied farmers to its cause under the banner of "Food for Defense." In radio addresses, leaflets, and filmstrips, USDA entreated farmers to dramatically increase production—and offered to pay for it. Food for Defense emerged as an extension of the farm program that began in 1933. Its advocates compared it to the industrial mobilization then underway to build airplanes and war materiel. It aimed to convert massive stores of feed into badly-needed foods but acknowledged that this would be a long process. "You can build a new plane factory in a very few weeks, and you can work three shifts once you start production. But even in the midst of a defense program, you can't make a little pig grow any faster than little pigs have always grown," spokesmen lamented.[26] Agriculture policymakers recognized the uphill battle they faced in preparing to meet the burgeoning need. Years of AAA production control

[24] Baker and Rasmussen, *Chronology of the War Food Administration,* 3; "7,000,000 farmers to get questionnaire on efforts to meet defense food needs" *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, September 19, 1941, 29.
[25] Baker and Rasmussen, *Chronology,* 29.
[26] Farm Security Administration, "Food For Defense Report" May 6, 1941, USDA History Collection, Series 1 box 1.2/3 folder I B2c, National Agricultural Library.

had deeply engrained the fear of surpluses, and overcoming it would require a psychological shift. Furthermore, existing overages could not simply be shipped overseas to meet the food needs of allies at war for democracy. These countries needed specific products, particularly milk, meat, eggs, and tomatoes, and they were not alone.

Americans likewise required drastically improved diets if they were to be fit for national service. The lack of healthy men available for wartime service in World War I stymied military manpower efforts and had since become a cause of significant national concern, even contributing to the push for Universal Military Training.[27] The increased need for strong agricultural labor meant farm families also needed to eat well. In times of war, labor would be scarce and inefficiency not an option.[28] Oscar Meier, then head of the Co-op Education Section of the Rural Electrification Administration, explained that fully one third of Americans lived below the "nutrition safety-line," while another third lacked access to necessary vitamins and minerals. In order to bring the US to full realization of healthy diets, Americans would have to consume "5 million tons more tomatoes and citrus fruits, 2.5 billion gallons more milk, 4 million tubs more butter, 35 million cases more eggs, and double [the] present consumption of green leafy and yellow vegetables."[29] These dietary improvements required significantly increased production if Americans were to have any hope of eating to their target.

In a speech titled "Better Health for National Defense," Dr. R. C. Williams, Chief Medical Officer of the Farm Security Administration, starkly outlined the problem of rural health. Of all health examinations performed on rehabilitation families, he said, only five percent

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[27] See William Taylor, *Every Citizen a Soldier* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014) for a discussion of recruiting efforts and policy proposals including concerns over nutritional deficiencies.
[28] US Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Radio Service, "More Food For Defense," June 11, 1941, Homemaker's Chat Collection, 1.9 In3Hh 6-11-41, National Agricultural Library.
[29] Oscar Meier, "Better Diets on Farms, Defense Aim," *Rural Electrification Administration Electro-Economy Supplement* no. 1 (1941), 1-2.

of cases demonstrated excellent health, while twenty percent showed health problems that "definitely hindered" welfare. Williams presented this as more than a humanitarian concern for rural suffering, but as a major problem for national defense. Rural communities, he explained, contributed double the number of per capita military volunteers when compared with cities and towns, and military officers found one in three of these volunteers physically unfit for service. "The physical fitness not only of our military men, but also of our civilian population will determine the effectiveness of our defense efforts," he warned. "The health of the nation depends upon the health of the individuals who comprise that nation."[30]

For these reasons, nutrition became a major focus of American agriculture policy throughout the course of the Second World War. Farmers received instructions to follow a two-pronged approach in the initial Food for Defense push. First, they should add fifty chickens to their existing poultry flocks, then they were to select from three additional options: add a brood sow, add two milk cows, or add fifty additional chickens beyond the original fifty under the program. For those who could not afford the animals, the FSA offered loans for their purchase and for their care. Agents held informational meetings where farmers learned of the program and even hosted workdays to construct the needed chick brooders for the flocks.[31] Though speakers took care to remind their audiences of the wartime needs overseas, they continually emphasized that a farmer's own family came first in this nutrition plan. Home demonstration agents taught

[30] Dr. R. C. Williams, Speech: "Better Health for National Defense" November 18, 1940, USDA History Collection Series 1, Box 1.2/1, Folder IA2c1, National Agricultural Library.
[31] US Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Radio Service, "More Food For Defense," June 11, 1941, Homemaker's Chat Collection, 1.9 In3Hh 6-11-41, National Agricultural Library.

rural women to feed their families "an abundant and well-balanced diet."[32] In this way, the farm wife participated "in our own defense—against starvation."[33]

In May 1941, the administration grew so concerned about the role of nutrition in the national defense program that the president called together a National Nutrition Conference for Defense, held from May 26-28 at the Washington, DC Mayflower Hotel. The powerful speaker list included everyone from Wallace and Wickard to M. L. Wilson and Eleanor Roosevelt. Conference sessions examined new discoveries in scientific nutrition, and the degree to which Americans lived in conditions of malnourishment and vitamin deficiency. Throughout each session, the necessity of a better-fed population for successful wartime mobilization became more and more apparent.[34]

Attendees proposed a number of solutions for existing nutrition problems in the United States. These included renewed commitment to the national school lunch program, and an expansion of the food stamp plan. They also leaned heavily on agricultural policy as an instrument of change. Dr. Thomas Parran, then Surgeon General, delivered the conference concluding address titled "The Job Ahead." He emphasized the role of earlier agricultural practices in creating hardships both dietary and environmental, and promoted the importance of adjustment in responding to newly discovered nutritional needs.

> In the world struggle, food is a basic weapon… During the last war we tried to raise wheat on land fit only for grazing. It will require a generation of careful restoration to eliminate the dust bowls we created thereby. From the richest valley in the world, the Mississippi, we have exported the soil in the form of cotton, and created an economy of poverty, of tenancy, of pellagra, of anemia, and of hookworm…During the past decade… Some of the most hungry of our needy families have been able to get a better diet through the "Food Stamp Plan." It has

[32] Meier "Better Diets on Farms, Defense Aim," *2.*
[33] Farm Security Administration, "Food For Defense Report" May 6, 1941, USDA History Collection, Series 1 box 1.2/3 folder I B2c, National Agricultural Library.
[34] *Proceedings: National Nutrition Conference for Defense* (Washington, DC: Federal Security Agency, 1942).

> helped them, and it has made good use of some of our surplus foods. About half of our needy school children get at least one good meal a day for five days a week in the free school lunches. Actually, however, these important programs have been designed to take surplus foods off the market, not primarily to meet nutritional needs.
>
> If we add the crying needs of Great Britain to our own requirements, if all of our own people are to have a thoroughly good diet, we are faced with a shortage of animal proteins, of milk and milk products, and of the legumes. To meet this shortage now and to take our proper place in the half-starved world after the war, we must give direction to our farm output.[35]

He went on to speak of a "marriage of agriculture and public health," of utilizing government aid in agriculture to reconfigure farming practices and better meet the dietary needs of the nation and the war effort. He admonished listeners that "the nation can afford to be generous with its farmers" because "America is the last great hope on earth."[36]

As conference delegates asserted, the national school lunch program provided a direct connection between agriculture policy and defense preparedness efforts. Headlines declaring "Free School Lunch Program Said Aid to National Defense" and "School Lunch Project Attains New Importance" spread across the country.[37] USDA also put out a number of publications supporting the program's expansion, including pamphlets titled "Summer Lunches for Hungry Children" and "School Lunches and the Community." The USDA Farmer's Bulletin "School Lunches in Country and City" used similar language, touting benefits to children and farmers alike while reemphasizing the fundamental role played by nutrition in national defense. It even

[35] Dr. Thomas Parran, "Concluding Speech," *Proceedings: National Nutrition Conference for Defense* (Washington, DC: Federal Security Agency, 1942), 222.
[36] Parran, "Concluding Speech," 225.
[37] "Free School Lunch Program Said Aid to National Defense," *Yazoo City Herald* (Yazoo City, MS), July 18, 1941, 6; "School Lunch Project Attains New Importance," *Madisonville, KY Daily Messenger*, October 22, 1941, 3.

went so far as to call nutritional intervention in support of national defense "one of the most important reasons for maintaining" WPA nursery schools.[38]

School lunches, however, could only go so far in alleviating the serious nutritional deficiencies that faced the nation. The extension service and the land grant colleges also played a pivotal role in adjusting farm practices toward improving diets. Representatives from each were included on every state's nutrition committee and both spearheaded efforts to educate and convince farmers to adopt new approaches. The biggest obstacle noted by extension agents proved to be farmer attitudes. By this time, many farm families eschewed home gardening, exhibiting what a national extension report called "utter dislike" for the undertaking.[39] Agents encouraged gardening through many different methods including education and home demonstration. They found reluctant farmers could be circumvented by targeting homemakers and children, and they advocated approaches like the 4-H 10'x10' "pocket handkerchief" garden "so father would not object to sparing the irrigation water."[40]

On Friday, December 5, 1941, Secretary Wickard—together with Federal Security Agency Administrator, Paul McNutt—sent out invitations for a National Defense Gardening Conference in Washington, DC with the objective of crafting a national campaign "to encourage home and community gardens as a defense measure." They of course had no idea how much more pressing the emergency would become over that weekend. Two weeks later, on December 19, the conference began with perhaps a different mood than was originally intended, but with much the same purpose. Participants represented a host of gardening clubs and associations in

[38] Caroline Sherman, *USDA Farmer's Bulletin No 1899* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, March 1942), 22.
[39] *Security at the Grass Roots: A Report of Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics, 1940-1941* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), 8.
[40] *Security at the Grass Roots*, 9.

addition to farm press, USDA, AAA, WPA, the Office of Civilian Defense, and others. M. L. Wilson delivered opening remarks reflecting on the outbreak of "all-out total war" but he immediately cautioned attendees that the current gardening need differed greatly from that in the first world war. Then, he explained, gardens were needed so foods could be sent overseas. This time, home gardens should feed Americans on the home front and provide the strength and morale necessary to bring "final victory."[41]

Secretary Wickard echoed Wilson's invocation but included additional reasons for USDA's support of a national vegetable gardening program. He cited both the boon such produce would provide for the school lunch program and the "tremendous psychological value" of patriotic activities in which citizens could engage during wartime. Administrator Paul McNutt likewise described a new era "of cabbages and kings" where gardens provided an outlet for a mother's desperate desire to contribute to the war effort while her sons were away fighting. "'Morale' is a word they would not know." He said, "But the lowly collard may come to be, for them, its symbol." According to these leading agriculture policymakers, gardens would improve nutritional health, provide psychological comfort, and ultimately win the war. Far from mere commodity policy, the diet intervention carried out by USDA, FSA, and others during World War II clearly demonstrated their broader agenda of democratization, growth, and the formulation of American national identity. [42]

In practice, the production increases asked of American farmers proved challenging. For 1942, the USDA called for 125 billion pounds of milk, 28 million cattle, 4 billion dozen eggs, and 83 million hogs along with 3.4 million acres of peanuts and 9 million acres of soybeans. The

[41] M.L. Wilson speech "M-Day for Gardening" National Defense Gardening Conference Report, National Agricultural Library, https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/CAT31030763/PDF.
[42] Claude Wickard speech, National Defense Gardening Conference Report, National Agricultural Library, https://naldc.nal.usda.gov/download/CAT31030763/PDF.

soybean target alone represented nearly double the 5 million acres planted to the crop in 1940. Individual states faced staggering goals. Minnesota's included adding 688,000,000 pounds of milk, 15,000,000 dozen eggs, and 81,000,000 pounds of beef. At a speech in Salt Lake City, Wickard cast these goals as a call to arms, saying "this is our war, . . . [and food is] a whole arsenal of weapons in this struggle for human freedom."[43]

Wickard presented the reinvigoration of the Ever-Normal Granary concept as a tool of war to incentivize resistance against the Axis and cooperation with the Allies in those nations already overtaken. He emphasized the looting and privation they had suffered and reminded his farm audience that surplus food could be a great motivator, saying "the effect is the equivalent of about ten field armies. Food is our fifth column."[44] Looking ahead to war's end, he further admonished that using the American stockpile to feed "the famished people of the old world will give great force to our views. For they will show once and for all that democracy builds for the needs of common men."[45] Thus was US agricultural policy set in motion, not only to win the war—and the hearts, minds, and stomachs of the victims of fascism—but to win the peace and the entire future of humanity.

Farmers faced a daunting task of meeting huge production targets with limited machinery and equipment suddenly needed for armaments. Again, the Office of Agricultural Defense Relations appealed to their patriotism and shared American identity to encourage compliance as far as was possible under the circumstances. L. L. Needler, the chief of the Farm Equipment and

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[43] Adapted and paraphrased from Tolley, *Farmer Citizen at War,* 34; US Soybean Export Council http://ussec.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Chap1.pdf ; "7,000,000 farmers to get questionnaire on efforts to meet defense food needs" *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* Sept 19, 1941, 29; Claude R. Wickard, Office of Agricultural Defense Relations, "Agriculture: Food is Our Fifth Column," *Defense: Official Weekly Bulletin of Defense Agencies in the Office for Emergency Management,* September 23, 1941, 18.
[44] Wickard, "Food is Our Fifth Column," 18.
[45] Wickard, "Food is Our Fifth Column," 18.

Supplies Division of OADR, invoked the imagery of eating at the children's table in the face of unexpected company as a metaphor representing the bleak prospects for available farm machinery. "Defense is the unexpected company" he said "but we will agree, it must be first and fully served."[46]

The attack on Pearl Harbor made the need for increased food production even more pressing by early 1942. To support massive new goals, the pressure to adopt USDA-led scientific farming practices mounted. Official US entry into the war also brought about a shift in tone for the production programs. Food for Defense gave way to Food for Freedom and the target participants for the program expanded significantly. At their January 2 meeting, FSA officials identified three groups authorized to receive new Food for Freedom loans. These groups marked a broadening of the eligibility parameters by including standard rehabilitation borrowers already covered under the previous Food for Defense goals, lower-income farmers who, because of their operation's size, had been previously ineligible for FSA loans, and "non-self-supporting families" who had very little but who might, with loan funding, still be able to contribute to Food for Freedom totals. Additionally, the administration approved ongoing loans of $150 to children of low-income families for use in "vocational agriculture club projects." In his outline of the program, FSA official Joseph Stahl reiterated the importance of improving the operations and living conditions of impoverished farmers as a matter of national interest. Previously dismissed as unworthy of attention, they became indispensable producers ripe for rehabilitation in democracy's hour of need.[47]

[46] "Farmers urged to limit requirements of machinery," *Defense: Official Weekly Bulletin of Defense Agencies in the Office for Emergency Management,* September 23, 1941, 18.
[47] Joseph Stahl, "War Foods and the Small Farmer," *Agricultural Situation* 26*,* no. 5 (May 1942): 9-10.

Department representatives used every method available to champion the message of conservation and scientific efficiency, and thus continued to reshape American agriculture. In the spring of 1942, the documentary propaganda film "Wartime farming in the Corn Belt" embedded the gospel of scientific farming securely in the language of warfighting. The film depicted as noble the struggle to expand plowed acreage and raise farm output through World War I, but severely cautioned against those practices that contributed to Dust Bowl devastation. Footage showed precious topsoil flooding down hillsides and reminded farmers of the frustration they experienced constantly needing to increase input to maintain steady yields. "You can't make a living out of gullies!" the narrator intoned ominously. Then the mood shifted; cheerful farmers waved from atop modern tractors. They drove paths around neatly terraced fields as the film went on to champion "conservation farming practices" that would help American farmers meet goals set out under the Food for Freedom program. "Food for Freedom…a battle cry for the farmers of America!" it proclaimed.

When the reel rolled on the audience saw American B-17 bombers take to the skies against the Axis foe. "Food is an important part of the materiel of war, and the only way we can produce the added food we need is through conservation methods. . . . We've got to keep our bombers flying; that takes men and men need food!" The film rallied viewers with the message that agriculture service was a kind of military service, one vital to Allied success: "While men in Flying Fortresses do their job, farmers are doing theirs. . . . To keep 'em flying and fighting, FOOD FOR FREEDOM!"[48]

[48] US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, *Wartime Farming in the Corn Belt,* 1942 film, Iowa State University Special Collections, 4-1927, also available via Iowa State at https://youtu.be/nIJ6w7ezTtU.

The monthly magazine of USDA's Soil Conservation Service reinforced this message. It showcased diagrams that clearly delineated different crops on the farm and trumpeted "Selective Service for Every Acre." It emphasized that just as planes and munitions required specialized factories, so too did crops require specialized placement on the farm. According to the magazine, conservation practices ensured that every acre could remain in production for many years to come, a crucial component of military readiness since "the war may be a long one."[49]

Wickard also looked to the Extension Service to help "American farmers meet their obligations as producers and as citizens in the war for freedom."[50] In a memo to Director M. L. Wilson, he called on extension workers to use "all the ingenuity at their command" to implement creative solutions to wartime shortages of resources like equipment and tobacco cloth. He hoped extension agents could continue to promote the long-term efforts of the Soil Conservation Service, even as they asked farmers to massively increase production of certain crops. In this memo, Wickard established a Committee on War-Time Extension Work under Wilson's direction that would formulate special wartime agriculture policy. He then outlined seven additional programs to be administered by extension for the duration of the war. These included:

1. Rural fire control
2. Rural nutrition campaigns
3. Rural health campaigns
4. Community gardening projects
5. Organization for rural civilian defense
6. Cooperative marketing in support of Food for Freedom

[49] US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, "Selective Service for Every Acre," *Soil Conservation* 8, no. 1 (July 1942): 24.
[50] Claude Wickard to Extension director M. L. Wilson, February 11, 1942, printed in *Spirit and Philosophy of Extension Work* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 147.

7. Discussion groups "that consider the fundamental issues of the war and democracy's stake in it."

Furthermore, he tasked rural women with their own work "and much of the man's work too" filling every labor shortage and even protecting their homes, which, Wickard declared, placed them "in the active service list."[51]

Wickard acknowledged that his directive significantly expanded the work of the service, and called the new plan "a heavy load on extension workers." He urged Wilson to attempt enacting the plan with existing resource allocations but—given the scope of the expansion—instructed the director to outline his "financial requirements" to accomplish these tasks. His willingness to increase USDA's financial commitment to extension demonstrated just how vital he considered their work to be for the overall war effort.[52]

Food for Freedom remained paramount in 1942, but as production surged to meet its goals, available harvest labor fell short of demand. Military recruitment after the attack on Pearl Harbor contributed to the problem, though some historians have demonstrated the real shortage may have been more closely associated with low wages offered by industrial farming operations. Regardless, leaders at USDA bemoaned the food rotting in the fields and searched for ways to connect harvest labor with the farms that badly needed it. Two significant interventions—both utilizing the framework of the Farm Security Administration—targeted the farm labor problem directly. First, FSA expanded existing labor camps to help attract harvest hands to areas with the most desperate need. The foundations of the FSA migrant camp program began with a New Deal effort in December 1935 in Arvin, California. From its inception to the early months of 1942, ninety additional camps were established largely across the South and West with plans underway

[51] Wickard, *Spirit and Philosophy of Extension Work*, 149.
[52] Wickard, *Spirit and Philosophy of Extension Work*, 149.

for many additional sites up the eastern seaboard in the summer of 1942. With the loss of manpower to defense needs and the calls for production increases from USDA, requests for new camps flooded in from 250 counties representing all but seven states.[53]

FSA extolled the impact of these camps on the life of the migrant farm worker. Where he had once slept in ditches with his family undernourished and in poor health, camp made him an "efficient worker" and a "good citizen." Now mothers could contribute to the harvest effort while their young children received care in camp nurseries by day, and could gather with other women to sew for the Red Cross at night. Boys could play baseball and join scout troops while teenagers had good clean dating options at the camp community center—saving them from nights once spent at the dreaded "juke joint." Together, the entire family became "migrant soldiers on the food production front . . . a vital part of our large food productive force, sustaining our efforts in the fight for democracy." According to FSA leaders, they also became better citizens with a greater stake in that democracy. Camps—they claimed—transformed migrants into stronger and more efficient workers, both through increased sanitation and nutrition, and the direction of Farm Placement Officers who connected them with farms in need of labor. This "civilizing" interest again reveals the aim that US agricultural policy had pursued for decades, the remaking of rural life to fit the mold of agrarian democratic idealism.[54]

Closely linked to FSA's work with labor camps came the Bracero program—designed to recruit workers from Mexico. This program took direct aim at alleviating farm labor shortages and brought the USDA into the business of diplomacy and immigration. It also continued the

[53] Jill Weiss Simins, "Braceros in the Corn Belt Part One: Secretary Wickard & the Myth of the Agricultural Labor Shortage in WWII," *Indiana History Blog, Indiana Historical Bureau of Indiana State Library,* December 13, 2018, https://blog.history.in.gov/braceros-in-the-cornbelt-part-one/.
[54] "Migrant Soldiers on Food Production Front," USDA History Collection, Series I, subseries 2 Box 1.2/1, folder I A2c(1), National Agricultural Library.

pursuit of democratization and identity formation, even among visiting laborers. Alongside the State Department, USDA took a lead role in its negotiation and development. During the first world war, migrant farm workers from Mexico faced significant discrimination and hardship as they worked in American agriculture. Their plight proved especially daunting at the conclusion of the war when they attempted to return home but experienced difficulty collecting wages or securing transportation. Concern among Mexican officials about the potential recurrence of these hardships was not easily allayed. In order to secure the support of the Mexican government, Secretary Wickard traveled to Mexico City in June and July 1942. For these discussions, Wickard was joined by David Meeker, Assistant Director of the Office of Agricultural Defense Relations and by Major John O. Walker, Assistant Administrator of the Farm Security Administration.[55]

The terms of the resulting agreement included several pages of worker protections. Braceros would be officially employed by the Farm Security Administration, acting under the authority of the USDA. Their employment contracts were required to be written in Spanish and signed by the FSA and the worker himself under the supervision of the Mexican government. The FSA then entered into contracts with the "sub-employer," the farmer who needed labor. This arrangement aimed to ensure compliance with worker protections and placed FSA in the role of recruiter, travel agent, insurer, and labor supervisor. According to the terms laid out, workers received a guaranteed minimum wage, sanitary and weatherproof housing, access to schooling for their children, and the right to elect their own representatives to act as liaisons between the

[55] Claude R. Wickard, House, Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on the Farm Labor Program of 1943 before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations,* 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, 9; US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1942, vol. IX, 545.

workers and FSA. Braceros could also contribute to a protected Rural Savings Fund, kept by the US government, and purchase their own agricultural implements that would later be shipped to their homes on their behalf.[56]

As Veronica Martinez-Matsuda demonstrated in her work *Migrant Citizenship,* the democratizing aims of both the Bracero Program and the migrant farm labor camps did not proceed unchallenged. Significant condescension and outright discrimination emerged from surrounding communities who feared the erosion of their own local power when camp life brought organization and activism to the otherwise disenfranchised "federal homeless." Still, despite external pressure, migrants participated fully in this relational exchange of democratic ideals and utilized the camp council system to advocate for their own interests as well. Meanwhile, the FSA continued to showcase its commitment to democratic inclusion and society-building throughout each of these projects.[57]

The radically inclusive and wholistic approach of FSA's migrant labor camps contrasts starkly with the decision to utilize its expertise in the construction of internment centers for Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. Martinez-Matsuda captured both the similarities and deep, ethical incongruity acknowledged by members of the administration when she described the forcible evacuation of two of the administration's own architects.[58] Architectural historian Lynne Horiuchi also examined this dichotomy in the paper, "Architectural Ethics at War," which contrasted the almost shocking diversity of FSA's Region IX architect office before the war—

[56] 56 Stat. 1759 (1942), 1766-8.
[57] Verónica Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship : Race, Rights, and Reform in the U.S. Farm Labor Camp Program* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 182.
[58] Martínez-Matsuda, *Migrant Citizenship,* 182.

employing two architects of Japanese descent alongside women—with its subsequent participation in internment center housing and school design.[59]

Throughout this terrible pursuit, the removal of all people of Japanese descent from a huge swath of the West coast also posed a sizable problem for American agriculture and the ongoing Food for Freedom program. According to Farm Security Administration estimates, somewhere between one-half to three-quarters of all "evacuees" were engaged in agriculture at the outbreak of the war. Initial evacuation of Area 1 included 5,349 registered farms comprised of 210,179 total acres. The subsequent evacuation of Area 2 removed people from 647 farms totaling 24,582 acres. Specialization and cultural practice meant a significantly higher percentage of this acreage was in active cultivation at the time of its residents' removal. Furthermore, many of the crops grown by "evacuees" were unfamiliar to substitute operators, which complicated FSA's task of locating—and often financing—suitable replacements.[60] To make matters worse, many families forcibly evacuated from Area 2 had arrived there upon voluntary evacuation from Area 1 and already undertaken to establish new productive farms at considerable expense. FSA directors lamented this second disruption as a wholly preventable hardship in the relocation process.[61]

To facilitate the evacuation effort under Executive Order 9066, the Commanding General of Western Defense Command and Fourth Army, through the Secretary of War and the consent

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[59] Lynne Horiuchi, "Architectural Ethics at War: Farm Security Administration Designers and Their Japanese American Colleagues" https://www.academia.edu/30742411/Architectural_Ethics_at_War_Farm_Security_Administration_Designers_and_Their_Japanese_American_Colleagues.

[60] Laurence Hewes letter to Robert Taylor, Chairman Oregon USDA War Board, April 7, 1942*, Final Report of the FSA*, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement records, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder A8.01:2.

[61] Report by Laurence I. Hewes Jr. Regional Director, Region IX of the Farm Security Administration, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement records, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder A8.02.

of USDA, charged the Farm Security Administration to "do everything reasonably necessary to prevent any crop loss . . . and to reduce to a minimum the spoilage or loss of growing crops, to assist the evacuee in providing a substitute tenant . . . and to preserve the evacuee's equity to the fullest practicable extent . . . [and] if necessary, to take over and operate property where, in the absence of such action, growing crops would be neglected or abandoned or where the evacuee's equity . . . would otherwise deteriorate."[62] FSA officials worried, however, that without enforceable freezing power to hold land in trust, agricultural productivity and equity protection could not be guaranteed.

Both FSA Regional Director Laurence Hewes and Secretary Wickard highlighted "recalcitrant white American landlords [and] lien holders…some predatory, some nervous" who significantly impaired USDA's efforts to carry out this mission. So pressing was the need for quick FSA action that Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Grover B. Hill waived department regulations and granted blanket approval of department-funded air travel for Director Hewes and his employees. Through these efforts, the establishment of state non-profit organizations which could hold land in trust, and the grant of power to the secretary of agriculture to freeze problematic transactions, only one percent of the total evacuated acreage lacked completed arrangements at the conclusion of the first phase.[63]

Once in place at the relocation centers, evacuees could seek employment or "enlist" in the War Relocation Work Corps. Often, this meant work as agricultural labor on nearby farms. Despite the plans laid out by Center and Department leadership, many found themselves

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[62] Col. Karl Bendetsen, memo to Larry Hewes, March 27, 1942, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement records, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder A8.01:2.
[63] Laurence Hewes, letter to Colonel Karl R. Bendetsen, March 18, 1942; Claude Wickard, Letter to Henry Morgenthau, April 3, 1942; Grover B. Hill approval letter to Laurence Hewes, March 17, 1942, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement records, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder A8.01:2.

unwelcome in their new communities, and analysts at BAE expressed concern about the attitudes of farmers toward the use of evacuees for farm labor. They noted that the reluctance to employ "Japanese" laborers did not depend on the relative acuteness of the labor shortage in a given area, but rather broke along commodity lines, with beet farmers more often willing to hire evacuees while cotton farmers in "universally high proportions expressed hostility . . . with racial and national antagonisms" as their main objection. Department representatives interviewed local farmers across different regions and found that hostility increased when a higher number of local men were fighting in the Pacific theater. They also noted that farmers made no distinction between Nisei and Issei—those born in the US and Japan, respectively—but commonly referred to all residents of relocation centers simply as "Japanese." For this reason, BAE reports also used the label "Japanese" despite their explicit acknowledgement "that the greater portion of the persons referred to are citizens, and therefore properly called 'Americans'."[64]

Given the farm labor shortage and the critical need for full utilization of national agricultural resources in wartime, USDA set out to understand and overcome racist reluctance to the employment of evacuees on farms. In pursuit of this aim, they commissioned a nationwide study with the twofold purpose "(1) to further the utilization of the agricultural manpower contained within the relocation centers of the war relocation authority, and (2) at the same time to assist the permanent integration into American community life of the people of Japanese extraction who have been displaced from their homes."[65] Still, even among respondents who supported the hiring of evacuees as seasonal labor, there was near universal opposition to their permanent settlement in the area.

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[64] USDA Bureau of Agricultural Economics, "Farmers Attitudes toward the use of Japanese evacuees as farm labor" January 30, 1943, Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement records, UC Berkeley, Bancroft Library, BANC MSS 67/14 c, folder T 1.68.
[65] USDA BAE, "Farmers Attitudes," Introduction.

As BAE analysts worked to identify this recalcitrance, they gathered quotations from farmers to highlight the dominant attitudes in each region. The language, particularly among long-staple cotton farmers, appalled even the interviewers at the time and their sampling of quotes is perhaps best summarized by a terrible comment from an El Paso grower who declared "I wouldn't have a God damn Jap on my place. I might kill him." The final report concluded that the "racial or nationality background" of a laborer was of paramount concern to southern cotton farmers while the mountain beet areas focused their discussions less on talk of race and more on labor efficiency. Study authors highlighted the existence of the rare sympathetic commenters as critically important in their mission of spreading acceptance and "dissolv[ing] . . . antipathy."[66]

Though USDA employees expressly noted the historically exploitative nature of seasonal farm labor—and worked to foster positive changes in the arrangement—they hesitated to attempt reform too aggressively in the context of evacuee employment. Officials feared that such an approach might further alienate workers and hamper their larger goal of integration into community life. Resistance to worker protections built into the Bracero program already posed a similar problem, and reform-minded administrators certainly did not want to exacerbate the situation. As a result, the department pursued targeted worker pairing and selective permanent placement of individuals or small families into communities, hoping to provoke less local resistance. They also encouraged reducing the armed guards that supervised evacuee laborers, since the military presence contributed to the impression among many farmers that internees were criminals. Above all, the BAE report constantly reiterated the intention that evacuees be reintegrated into full participation in American democracy, and they viewed farm labor—albeit carefully managed and supervised—as a path to secure this goal.

[66] USDA BAE, "Farmers Attitudes," 8.

Environmental historian Connie Chiang demonstrates in *Nature Behind Barbed Wire* that despite these intentions, FSA did not succeed in protecting the agricultural interests of evacuees across the board. Chiang cites fraud investigations, intimidation, and long-held bitterness among Japanese-Americans when FSA representatives failed to turn over the proceeds from crop sales. She also reveals the extreme disadvantages Japanese-American farmers suffered through the use of corporations financed by WFA loans. Since FSA required full repayment of these loans before returning any profit to the farmers, and corporations consolidated several farms into a single account, one poor crop could negate the profits of all the others.[67]

From farm labor problems to the decentralized nature of local planting decisions, 1942 revealed stark realities about the ability of American farmers to provide uninterrupted food supplies throughout the course of the war. Increasing nutritive needs of the US military also played a role in this challenge. In 1941, the US military and foreign aid claimed roughly six percent of American food production. By 1943, that portion approached twenty-five percent. Roosevelt thus determined to consolidate control of US agriculture with Executive Order 9280. In this order he restructured the USDA, establishing a Food Production Administration charged with managing the planning and conduct of agricultural production, and a Food Distribution Administration responsible for collecting, allocating, and distributing that produce. Three months later, Roosevelt consolidated these administrations into what would become the War Food Administration for the duration of the conflict. [68]

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[67] Connie Chiang, *Nature Behind Barbed Wire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 35-36.
[68] Franklin D. Roosevelt, Executive Order 9280 "Delegation of authority over the food program" December 5, 1942, *Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, *1942* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1950), 517; Reginald C. Sherwood, "Food Distribution in Wartime" (speech given at the Meeting of the Institute of Food Technologists, St. Louis, MO, June 2, 1943, 1.9422 Civ2Sh5, National Agricultural Library.

Branches of the Food Distribution Administration took on the task of "protecting and, when possible, improving the nutrition of the American public." They continued pursuing dietary interventions through USDA, and advocated and secured the enrichment of all white bread and flour, the addition of vitamin A to nearly all margarine, and the conversion of industrial vegetable oils into edible fats. Food Distribution representatives also prepared instruction manuals and developed programs for nutrition in industry. They provided menus for use in factory cafeterias and exhorted managers to allow at least thirty-minute lunches for adequate caloric intake. The *Jenny on the Job* poster series specifically incorporated women in this diet redesign, and reminded viewers that "Jenny on the job Eats Man size Meals," depicting its coveralled heroine alongside a lunchbox stacked with sandwiches and vegetables.[69]

The concern for nutrition also reinvigorated interest in the national school lunch program and on July 12, 1943, Congress passed Public Law 129 which appropriated $50,000,000 for school lunches and milk. Most revealing in this appropriation was the stipulation that the program be carried out "without regard to the requirement . . . relating to the encouragement of domestic consumption." Here, school lunch was officially separated from its former existence as an avenue of surplus liquidation and transitioned to a focus on childhood nutrition.[70]

Even with these improvements, making the world safe for democracy required more than simply retooling American diets. In mid-1943 Roosevelt called for a United Nations conference on Food and Agriculture, to take steps toward securing "freedom from want" abroad. In his welcome message, Roosevelt explicitly linked the work of the conference to the greater war

[69] Sherwood, "Food Distribution in Wartime," 4; USDA Food Distribution Administration, *Manual of Industrial Nutrition*, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943); United States Public Health Service, *Jenny on the Job Eats Man Size Meals* poster, 1943, Shreveport, LA, R.W. Norton Art Museum, *Pelican State Goes to War* exhibit, September 13, 2018.
[70] Department of Agriculture Appropriation Act 1944, Pub. L. No. 129, July 12, 1943.

effort, declaring, "We know that in the world for which we are fighting and working the four freedoms must be won for all men. We know, too, that each freedom is dependent upon the others; that freedom from fear, for example, cannot be secured without freedom from want." With this conference, and the resulting establishment of the permanent UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Roosevelt initiated a US-led agricultural intervention of global proportions.[71]

The conference included 163 delegates from 44 countries. Those participants agreed that the most immediate task facing the United Nations was the successful defeat of the Axis and conclusion of the war, but in the war's aftermath, the liberation of people from tyranny and starvation would immediately follow.[72] In his speech to conference delegates at the White House, Roosevelt acknowledged that nations had never been able to produce sufficient food to provide necessary nutrition to all their people, but, he declared hopefully, "neither have Nations representing over 80 percent of the world's two billion inhabitants ever before been joined together to achieve such an aim."[73] Roosevelt saw the emerging FAO as a vehicle for democratization and freedom around the world. He hoped that by its influence, member nations would be more closely knit together, and more representative of America's agrarian democratic ideal. On this vision for FAO, Roosevelt expounded:

> Our ultimate objective can be simply stated: It is to build for ourselves, meaning for all men everywhere, a world in which each individual human being shall have the opportunity to live out his life in peace; to work productively, earning at least enough for his actual needs and those of his family; to associate with the friends

[71] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "A Letter to the UN Conference on Food and Agriculture" *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1943* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 211.
[72] *United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture: Final Act and Section Reports* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1.
[73] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Freedom from Want and Freedom from Fear go Hand in Hand" speech given June 7, 1943, *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1943* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), 238.

> of his choice; to think and worship freely; and to die secure in the knowledge that his children, and their children, shall have the same opportunities.[74]

For several of the delegations in attendance, these statements appeared radically progressive in light of their circumstances at home, but they perfectly reflected Roosevelt's ideal. Reports on the conference made frequent connections to the Atlantic Charter and invoked the fight for "a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and freedom from want."[75] They also heralded the democratic nature of the conference itself, pointing out that diplomat delegates were joined by men in agriculture and farmers from around the world alongside nutritionists and public health specialists. In the end, conference participants concluded that mankind could achieve freedom from want through concerted, mutual effort in global agriculture. This pursuit would shape much of the post-war world.[76]

As the war stretched on, not all of Roosevelt's initiatives proceeded so smoothly. The President confronted difficult decisions in agriculture policy and in his New Deal program more generally. The serious infighting and factionalism at USDA worsened the situation as did Wickard's caution and uncertainty in the light of these territorial disputes. Ultimately vicious politicking brought about Herbert Parisius's resignation as Director of Food Production in January 1943. Media outlets reported this incident as a subordination of FSA to AAA interests and significantly weakened the formerly cohesive congressional support for the small farmer and

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[74] Roosevelt, "Freedom from Want," 241.
[75] Atlantic Charter Article VI, quoted in "A Start Toward Freedom From Want" *United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture: Final Act and Section Reports* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 4.
[76] *United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture: Final Act and Section Reports* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1943), 1.

the Farm Security Administration. FSA then experienced major funding cuts from Congress and Roosevelt feared he could not afford to expend political capital to protect the agency.[77]

Despite these funding cuts, promotion of the American family farm did not cease during the middle years of the war. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, also known as the GI Bill of Rights, supported family farming as a pathway by which returning troops could reintegrate into the American economy and democratic ideal. It authorized loans for the purchase of farms and equipment by US war veterans and also made them eligible to borrow under the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant act. USDA received thousands of inquiries from veterans as the war wound to a close. Millions were looking to try their hand at farming even without prior experience, and USDA involved itself extensively in their decisions. In response to the deluge, the department issued a whole collection of pamphlets and guidebooks to help these men and women transition their swords into plowshares.[78]

Pamphlets covered helpful topics like "Shall I be a Farmer?" and featured soldiers and sailors earnestly reading USDA literature on their covers. These publications cautioned would-be agriculturalists about the difference between the dream farm—equipped with an attractive home, "a devoted and helpful wife," and an orchard just beyond the garden—and the "real farm" which required serious labor and sometimes brought hardship. They encouraged veterans without farm experience to spend a year in farm labor before moving into tenancy and then ownership. They also guided young GIs toward the education benefits of the new GI Bill and suggested they undertake schooling programs at state agricultural colleges. Still, even as the literature called for

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[77] For an explanation of these events and an in-depth history of the FSA, See Sidney Baldwin, *Poverty and Politics : The Rise and Decline of the Farm Security Administration* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

[78] Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, Pub. L. No. 346, June 22, 1944; USDA Bureau of Agricultural Economics, *Suggestions to Prospective Farmers* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1945).

caution and forbearance, it extoled the virtues of farm life as a fulfilling way to create one's own destiny and "a good place to bring up children."[79]

Upon implementation of the GI Bill, some observers and policy analysts noted that its funding could not adequately provide for farm purchases by veterans who did not have other sources of capital or savings. As a result, they encouraged a reliance on the Farm Security Administration to fill this gap. The funding cuts discussed above made this difficult in practice, but even a Congress increasingly at odds with FSA found veteran farm support a pull too strong to ignore. For the coming 1946 year they apportioned $25,000,000 to the administration to aid veteran farm purchases and specifically exempted those funds from the tenancy percentage apportionment requirement which usually worked to keep seventy-five percent of FSA funding in just sixteen southern states.[80]

The immediate postwar era brought multiple changes in leadership at USDA. Following Roosevelt's death in April 1945, Wickard left the office to head the Rural Electrification Administration. Clinton Anderson then took the Secretary's position which he held until 1948. Debate continued to rage surrounding the Farm Security Administration and in August 1946 Congress passed Public Law 731 to finally supplant the organization. Then, on November 1, 1946, the newly established Farmers Home Administration (FHA) became active and formally absorbed the work previously carried out by FSA. Truman appointed former FSA administrator Dillard B. Lasseter to head the new agency and maintain continuity of its programs. The Farmers Home Administration made loans to small family farmers as had its predecessor, but also took on the new focus of veteran farm lending in the aftermath of war. Agency officials reported heavy

[79] United States Department of Agriculture, *Shall I be a Farmer?* (Washington, DC: United States Department of Agriculture, 1946).
[80] Lowry Nelson, *Farms for Veterans, Planning Pamphlet no. 47* (Washington, DC: National Planning Association, September 1945), 18.

demand for farm loans among veterans, which constituted roughly half of their clients. Their reports paint a bucolic picture of the serviceman just back from war with a bright young wife and a hunger for the Jeffersonian ideal. These eager fledgling farmers simply needed support to resume their rightful place in American agriculture and, by extension, in American democracy. In this way, the work of the FHA aligned with the vision of FSA reformers who had gone before them, despite the intervening hostility and appropriation battles faced by the earlier agency.[81]

Many youthful borrowers, FHA acknowledged, had limited experience in farm management and thus required supervision and intervention to ensure their success. Fortunately, leaders reported, "Most of these veterans . . . are convinced of the importance of up-to-date, scientific methods and sound management." Borrowers commonly utilized GI Bill benefits to undertake education and training in support of their farming efforts. Land-grant colleges and agricultural agencies built programs that offered classroom instruction and supervised farm work with expert advice and direction. The programs also helped keep the young farmers solvent in their early years. In Iowa, for example, a veteran enrolled in the owner-operator phase of the training program could receive up to $90 per month in subsistence pay depending on the average farm return in his area and his own estimated farm return. Supervisors taught long-range goals which encouraged "betterment of the land" through contouring, terracing, and other soil conservation approaches. In addition to farm management training, FHA also employed 1,200 home economists in its first year to teach young farm wives needed skills and to improve the overall health and quality of life in the countryside. This corps helped families "with gardening,

[81] Farmers Home Administration Act of 1946, Pub. L. No. 731; "Strengthening the Family Farm: A Report on Activities of the Farmers Home Administration for the 1946-1947 fiscal year," (Washington, DC: USDA Farmers Home Administration, November 15, 1947).

canning, food storage, nutrition, meal planning . . . budgeting, sewing, kitchen improvement, every-day health practices, home safety, and sanitation."[82]

With soldiers returning home and the world settling into a tenuous peace, what had it all been for? In BAE's journal *Land Use Policy,* USDA sociologist Olaf Larson reflected on the lessons learned from rural intervention and the path forward for American agricultural policy. He wrote:

> For the individual family the goals . . . were to obtain a physically healthful level of living, to acquire the skills and abilities needed to manage one's own farm and home successfully and independently, to achieve security, to obtain enough land for an economic unit of the family-farm type, to become a full participant in a democratic way of life, and later, to have maximum employment of the family labor in the production related to the war. The program also had broad objectives with respect to agriculture, rural society, and general welfare of the Nation. . . . To preserve, reinforce, and perpetuate the family-type farm and to foster farming as a way of life rather than as purely a commercial enterprise have been prominent national goals, along with the encouragement of land conservation. . . . The objectives rest upon fundamental assumptions which are a complete rejection of the relief philosophy handed down from Elizabethan "poor laws." One other basic philosophical idea came to be propounded: the resources for lasting rehabilitation rest within the people themselves; therefore, the program must direct its efforts toward tapping and mobilizing these resources. This premise is in accord with the democratic spirit.[83]

Immediately after Larson's article appeared a piece by M. L. Wilson about the postwar possibilities for rural art and the role of extension in the psychological and economic development of rural creativity.[84]

All of these efforts, from the War Food Administration and the Food for Freedom campaign, to the rural rehabilitation work of the FSA, clearly reveal the nearly all-encompassing purpose of US agricultural policymakers to design a rural life more in keeping with the

[82] "Farm Training Program Ready for Iowa Vets" *The Courier* (Waterloo, IA)*,* July 7, 1946, 28; Farmers Home Administration, "Strengthening the Family Farm," 15,7.
[83] Olaf Larson, "Lessons from Rural Rehabilitation," *Land Policy Review* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1946), 13.
[84] M.L. Wilson, "Rural Handicrafts – Postwar Possibilities," *Land Policy Review* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1946), 13.

Jeffersonian ideal of agrarian democracy. They strove not only to improve farming practices and conserve soil fertility—though those aims certainly played a part—but to build healthier communities, to provide opportunities for stronger social connection, and to promote an abiding sense of citizenship through their efforts on the farm. In this period of total, global war, such programs sprang from the deep conviction that healthy, educated, and successful yeoman farmers made better warfighters, and they made better Americans, too.

CHAPTER 5: CULTIVATING CONTAINMENT

The Great Depression and the second world war had given American policymakers extensive practice in reshaping rural communities. Roosevelt's administration pursued lifestyle intervention directly through numerous programs including rural rehabilitation, rural electrification, and the establishment of farm labor camps. Diet reform efforts saw to it that Americans were eating better and staying healthier. A new generation headed into the fields in search of the good life—many of whom had never worked the land before—under the recently enacted G.I. Bill, and officials continued to expand America's war on farm tenancy with new loan programs and farmer education opportunities. They also shifted this focus outward into the larger world with the founding of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. Truman continued these pursuits when he ascended to the presidency upon Roosevelt's death, quickly making them his own. The 1950s would bring even more opportunity for the expansion of Jefferson's model, not only within the boundaries of the United States and her territories, but overseas as well. Despite divergent historical depiction, both Presidents Truman and Eisenhower utilized farm and rural policies to pursue a progressive Jeffersonian agrarianism as a weapon against the spread of communism across the globe. While these two administrations differed in party and in tone, their employment of US agriculture policy in the emerging Cold War context demonstrates a marked similarity of purpose that links them both to the larger historical trend.

When Harry Truman took the oath of office on January 20, 1949, he delivered an inaugural address of key importance, not only to US agriculture, but to farming the world over. He spoke of an uncertain future, of nations looking to the United States for guidance and hope. He emphasized America's desire that all people might "achieve a decent and satisfying life" and underscored that only democracy—as opposed to communism—could enable such a lofty aim.

Truman announced four major courses of action in his program to promote peace and freedom. The first three points focused on diplomatic and economic recovery in the post-war era. "Point Four," as it would come to be known, defined his agenda for global aid in food and agriculture.[1]

Six months later, Truman addressed Congress directly requesting legislation to authorize his aid program "to assist the peoples of economically underdeveloped areas to raise their standards of living."[2] The resulting program encompassed efforts by USDA, the State Department, and many others who all set to work outlining and implementing the Point Four agenda. By December, the State Department's Public Affairs office had published colorful volumes on the Point Four Program that explained "How the two-thirds live" in global poverty. They bemoaned primitive agriculture, overcrowded hospitals, and widespread starvation-level diets with graphs demonstrating inequity in everything from calories to literacy rates. Despite the bleak portrait of suffering, these booklets served to spread messages of hope. State Department authors emphasized the successes of US technical assistance programs throughout Latin America in the foregoing decade. They heralded the "sensational results . . . by the application of American 'know-how' and 'show-how'" with data illustrations jumping off the Latin American map. An arrow shooting out of Guatemala showed how one US horticulturalist doubled experimental coffee yields there in just three years. The Venezuela graphic celebrated that the Institute of Inter-American Affairs health program reduced the incidence of malaria in Maracay from twenty-two percent in 1943 to less than one percent in 1947. All that remained was for the

[1] Harry Truman, "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1949, Harry Truman Library, Independence, MO, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/19/inaugural-address.
[2] Harry Truman, *Message to Congress: Assistance to Economically Underdeveloped Areas,* H. Doc 240, 81st Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* pt. 6: 8397.

United States to transplant this program of agricultural and technological assistance from Latin America to the global stage.[3]

As with most US policy—agricultural and otherwise—Point Four did not enjoy unquestioned support in Congress. Correspondence between Truman's staff indicates dissatisfaction among Republicans on the House Foreign Affairs Committee who hoped to condition the release of benefits on the signing of favorable trade agreements. Such attempts notwithstanding, these representatives supported technical assistance in health and agriculture for underdeveloped nations, and demonstrated that support through committee discussions and the eventual passage of the *Act for International Economic Development*. [4]

USDA became central to the plan crafted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. According to the committee report, of the fourteen federal departments and agencies—outside of State—with extensive responsibilities under the program, the Department of Agriculture took preeminence. Its role included "soil conservation, plant entomology and development, extension service, forestry, statistics, etc."[5] The State Department set general policies and distributed funding, but project design and management authority lay with the individual departments and agencies tasked with carrying out specific programs, including primarily USDA. Agriculture also constituted the largest expenditure category of the Point Four program and proponents emphasized it as the most immediate need of people worldwide. They continued to rally support

[3] US State Department, Department of Public Affairs, *The Point Four Program,* Economic Cooperation Series 23, Publication 3347 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1949); US Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Institute of Inter-American Affairs Hearings Before Subcommittee No. Four, State Department Organization and Personnel of the Committee on Foreign Affairs,* 80th Cong., 1st sess., 12.
[4] David D. Lloyd to Charles Murphy, October 7, 1949, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, Accessed July 28, 2020. https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/memorandum-david-lloyd-charles-murphy
[5] US Congress, House Committee on Foreign Relations, *Point Four Background and Program (International Technical Cooperation Act of 1949)*, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, H. Rep., 10;

for the plan as a bulwark against communism by arguing that increased standards of living worked "toward peace and freedom" and helped to build "political democracy." This was the heart of Point Four.[6]

Many months passed between Truman's inaugural proposal of Point Four and the legislation to enact the program. Those months, from 1949 to summer 1950, included several major Cold War developments which increased pressure on Congress to pursue all avenues of containment against the spread of communism. The period saw the Soviet Union's first nuclear bomb test, the conclusion of the civil war in China, and the rebuilding of the communist party in Indonesia. Still, debate remained. In attempting to negotiate the procedural hurdles facing the bill, Secretary of State Dean Acheson wrote to Truman outlining an omnibus bill which would incorporate aid to Korea and the UN Palestinian refugee program, the extension of the Economic Cooperation Act, and—tacked onto the end—the President's Point Four proposal. Acheson suggested that Truman reach out to Senator Tom Connally of Texas on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to prepare him for the combination bill and request his swift action in light of the world situation.[7]

President Truman stressed these same concerns in his March 25 letter to John Kee, the Chair of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He admonished Kee that "Poverty, Misery, and insecurity are the conditions on which communism thrives," explaining that the Point Four act under consideration "will provide the peoples in under-developed areas of Asia, the Middle East, and other parts of the world the hope and the tools they need to achieve and maintain real

[6] House Committee on Foreign Relations, *Point Four Background,* 15; State Department, *The Point Four Program*, 17.
[7] Dean Acheson to Harry Truman, March 8, 1950, Official File, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, accessed July 14, 2019, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/memorandum-dean-acheson-harry-s-truman.

freedom for themselves. . . . These measures are not acts of charity. . . . They are, indeed, the keystone of our protection against the destruction of another war and against the terrible weapons of this atomic age. Our armed forces can afford us a measure of defense, but real security for our Nation and all the rest of mankind can come only from building the kind of world where men can live together in peace."[8]

Truman saw this program, centered on agricultural reform and assistance, as a key component of US Cold War strategy. By utilizing the very same methods of rural intervention and democratic nation-building that formed a critical component of USDA's mission for the preceding four decades, the president hoped his administration could export progressive reform and democratization on a global scale, and in so doing, stave off the spread of communism indefinitely.

On June 5, 1950, the plan became law. In structure, it closely followed the omnibus outline provided to Truman by Acheson in March. Title IV, the Act for International Development, affirmed "The people of the United States and other nations have a common interest in the freedom and in the economic and social progress of all peoples. Such progress can further the secure growth of democratic ways of life."[9] Editorial staff from Ithaca, New York, to Muncie, Indiana, were unimpressed. Some papers accused the program of "buying allies," while others fretted about the uncertain end date, but Congressional support showed a strong commitment to the policy. Three months later, Truman signed the appropriation act which funded the first year of Point Four. On September 8, with Executive Order 10159, he authorized

[8] Harry Truman to the Honorable John Kee, Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, Public Papers of the President, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO, accessed July 28, 2020, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/78/letter-chairman-house-committee-foreign-affairs-urging-enactment-foreign.
[9] Foreign Economic Assistance Act of 1950, Pub. L. No. 535, 64 Stat. 198, (1950).

the Secretary of State to head the program and to call together the International Development Advisory Board established by the act. Point Four was finally funded and staffed.[10]

It had taken nearly two years for this policy to be formally enacted, but recipient nations signed on immediately. Sixty nations applied for Point Four support before Congress even appropriated its funding. By October, the US and Iran formalized a bilateral technical assistance agreement under the program. The agreement represented the first new project undertaken as a result of Point Four. In addition to these arrangements, the act also provided further funding for programs in place in Latin America and through the United Nations assistance program. Truman highlighted the bipartisan interest in this program when he appointed Republican Nelson Rockefeller to head the Advisory Board, which counted several land-grant college presidents—including John A. Hannah, former president of the Association of Land Grant Colleges and Universities—among its eleven members. He appointed another, Oklahoma State College President Dr. Henry Garland Bennett, to direct the entire program as administrator of the Technical Cooperation Administration. [11]

Land-grant institutions played a major role in the implementation of Point Four by training American "agricultural missionaries" for service abroad, training foreign visitors at their campuses in American agricultural practices, lending staff members for short-duration international missions, and directly operating cooperative agriculture projects in Point Four recipient nations. The University of Arkansas became the first to formalize a cooperative program of education and extension using Point Four funds in Divisa, Panama, and many other

[10] "Descent into Materialism" *The Star Press* (Muncie, IN), June 25, 1950, 6; "Point Four Plan Criticized" *Ithaca Journal* (Ithaca, NY), June 3, 1950, 7; Harry Truman, Exec. Order No. 10159, 15 Fed. Reg. 6103 (September 12, 1950).
[11] "Descent into Materialism," *The Star Press* (Muncie, IN), June 25, 1950, 6; US Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, *The Point Four Program Progress Report*, December 1950, Pub No. 4042, 1, 4.

projects followed. In the first year alone, cooperative projects with land-grant institutions could be found in twenty-two countries from Mexico to the Philippines. Altogether, USDA's Point Four work in 1951 included 150 Department technicians directly employed in twenty-four countries. Additionally, the Department supported technical assistance agreements through the Food and Agriculture Organization with forty-eight countries and the assignment of 378 specialists abroad.[12]

USDA's Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations (OFAR) managed a significant amount of the administrative responsibility involved in the negotiation of these agreements. By June 1951 the Office helped draw up formal agreements with 32 countries and established informal technical assistance relationships in many others. Fifty-five of the department technicians working abroad belonged directly to OFAR with their responsibilities varying depending on assignment location. In most Latin American countries, these representatives worked to support food production through research and extension, while in Cuba agents focused on fiber increases. OFAR sent an extension specialist in the subject of rice cultivation to Ceylon and four of its representatives traveled to India to share information in agricultural engineering and biology.[13]

One of the Office's proudest partnerships, and a favorite of Truman's, developed in response to Iran's historic locust plague that year. OFAR sent representatives to the country in April 1951 where—in conjunction with Iranian specialists—they established and implemented a plan for locust eradication amid the worst swarm the country had experienced in eighty years. The solution embodied the Point Four cooperation model and the sharing of US agricultural

[12] John Hannah, "Land-Grant Institutions in Point Four," *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 2 (February 1951): 41-44; Charles Brannan, *Report of the Secretary of Agriculture 1951* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 29.
[13] USDA, Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations, *Report of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations: Fiscal Year 1950-1951* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951), 6-7.

resources on the basis of technical assistance agreements. At the request of the Iranian government, OFAR dispatched an entire team to meet the young brood of locusts hatching on 600,000 acres along the thirtieth parallel. That team included two entomologists, eight pilots, and a mechanic, equipped with eight small planes loaded inside larger DC-4s. They also carried ten tons of a new insecticide called Aldrin. Following the directions of Iranian "flag men" on the ground, American pilots sprayed insecticide across huge swaths of southern Iran. The Office calculated that the effort saved 53,715 acres of crops with a 100 percent kill rate after four days. Upon completion of the locust eradication effort, the US donated the planes and spray equipment to Iran for future insect control needs.[14]

Not all participants would remember the program in purely successful terms, however. Stanley Andrews, Director of the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations in 1951 and Director of the Technical Cooperation Administration from 1952-1953, later recalled the speed and efficiency of the Point Four program as both a blessing and a curse. He applauded the resources the department had gathered and the directory of experts which enabled USDA to immediately call on and dispatch specialists to meet any problem in agriculture worldwide, but he included a note of caution. This rapidity, coupled with a new insecticide and an incomplete understanding of local customs, he explained, resulted in severe illness across the affected region when residents ate the dead insects and thus consumed the insecticide as well.[15]

As US agriculture policy built mechanisms to reorder the entire rural world and fortify its inhabitants against the specter of communism, it also continued its effort to perfect America's own family farm model. In 1951, Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan declared renewed

[14] Edson J. Hambleton, "Cooperative Campaign Fights Iran's Locusts," *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 7 (July 1951): 139-142.
[15] Stanley Andrews, interviewed by Richard McKinzie, October 31, 1970, Stanley Andrews Papers, Harry Truman Library, Independence, MO. https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/oral-histories/andrewss

emphasis on this cohort with the announcement of the Family Farm Policy Review. He reiterated the connection between rural development and democratization, and explained USDA's approach by reminding readers,

> Because so much of the world is rural, every opportunity for farm people to better themselves and the conditions surrounding rural life can do for world peace something that great armies cannot possibly accomplish. If democracy is to be a continuing source of hope to rural people elsewhere in the world, democracy must continue to advance in rural America. The Department of Agriculture thinks the family farm is so vital to the economy, prosperity, and military defense of the Nation that it is reviewing all of its programs and activities to make sure that they are serving the family farm well. . . . The American family farm pattern is one of the Nation's main exhibits in the world struggle for men's minds and one of the examples we hold out for all the world to see. We seek to extend the benefits and advantages of our system to rural populations elsewhere. To be successful in this, we should make sure that our own pattern is the best possible one.[16]

Undersecretary of Agriculture Clarence McCormick delivered much the same message in a speech titled "An Excellent Living and Something More" at the ninth annual Rural Life Conference in March. McCormick warned of the possibility for a third world war made all the more terrible by the new atomic age. He outlined the policy review as a way to "wage peace throughout the world" arguing that "we want and need the kind of democracy that is built on the foundation of family farming, a democracy that offers human dignity, opportunity, responsibility, and freedom here at home, and holds out hope to the world."[17]

Initial participants in the policy review included representatives of each agency within the Department, the USDA field organization, the National Council of Churches, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Lutheran Council, the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives, the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, the National Grange, the

[16] Charles Brannan, US Department of Agriculture, *Family Farm Policy Review: The Family Farm's Future,* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 1951), 1, 5.
[17] Wesley McCune to Joseph Short, with attachment, March 30, 1951, Department of Agriculture, Truman Papers, Research File: The Brannan Plan, Harry S. Truman Library, Folder 4-2.

National Farmers Union, and the American Farm Bureau Federation. For several months, representatives from each of these participated in the work of the review subcommittee, planning methods to assess existing policy impact on family farms across the country. At the last meeting, however, the Farm Bureau representatives abruptly withdrew from the project. From that point on, AFBF leadership antagonized both Brannan and review participants, even going so far as to claim that the project "originated with Alger Hiss," a reference to the Soviet agent in Franklin Roosevelt's State Department.[18]

Despite this late opposition, the review called together state and regional committees and local farmers themselves to provide ideas and feedback. Among the proposals for policy change, ongoing support for the Rural Electrification Administration and an expansion of REA's mission to include rural telephone service garnered much attention. Former Secretary of Agriculture turned REA Administrator Wickard had testified at length before Congress in 1949 concerning the dire need for rural telephone service. By 1951, this became a focus for USDA in its effort to improve rural standards of living and further modernize farming operations. Brannan placed special emphasis on the democratizing impact of rural electrification in his policy review. He suggested that such cooperative structures supported a sense of community tolerance, neighborliness, and solidarity which helped to build stronger rural communities overall.[19]

The report and recommendations resulting from the Family Farm Policy Review made absolutely clear the role policymakers envisioned for America's small agricultural operators. By

[18] US Congress, Senate, Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, *Reorganization of the Department of Agriculture: Hearings before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments,* 82th Cong., 1st sess., 1951, 424-432.
[19] Testimony of Claude Wickard, Congressional Record, Senate, 81st Cong. 1st Sess., Vol. 95, Pt. 6, 8323, June 6, 1949; Charles Brannan, *Report of the Secretary of Agriculture: 1951* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 22; Charles Brannan, *Family Farm Policy Review: Provisional Report and Tentative Recommendations* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1951), I.

continuing their progress in production, mechanization, education, and quality of life, they increased their position as stakeholders in American capitalism and democracy. This, Brannan argued, contributed to defense preparedness and shone as an image of hope to poverty-stricken peoples around the globe who "sooner or later . . . will take a side in the world struggle . . . for us or against us."[20] Equally important, according to Brannan's message, such progress fostered "domestic security," whereas "lack of economic opportunity makes for bitterness and hatred."[21] Only by assuring the stability of the Jeffersonian ideal, he counseled, could the United States hope to suppress agrarian insurgency whether at home or abroad. Proactive rehabilitation of the American family farm model provided a means to both ends.

Brannan's domestic security rationale appears consistently throughout the 122 page policy report. The Agricultural Research Administration earned praise for contributing to it through their study of home management, farm housing, and the challenges of unevenly distributed mechanization. The report directly credited the Rural Electrification Administration with the "stabilization of the rural economy" and the preservation of rural youth on the farm as well as increasing the general attractiveness of farm life which in turn "strength[ened] rural democracy."[22]

Many farm groups who participated in gathering information for the Family Farm Policy Review strove to further its policy agenda within their own spheres. The Northern Great Plains Tenure Committee, with the support of the Farm Foundation of Chicago, helped organize an Inter-regional Family Farm Policy Research Conference in mid-July, 1951. There, participants debated and established policy goals which heavily emphasized the stabilizing power of high

[20] Charles Brannan, *Family Farm Policy Review: Provisional Report and Tentative Recommendations* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1951), III.
[21] Brannan, *Family Farm Policy Review,* VII.
[22] Brannan, *Family Farm Policy Review,* 5, 108.

standards of rural living and economic opportunity. Of the five aims the conference report listed for public farm policy, three included references to political stability and the prevention of agrarian radicalism. The report also invoked Brannan's message in the pamphlet reproduced above and echoed his sentiments stating "family type farm organization is desirable for rather general application in this country" in the interest of "basic values," and that the "family type farm should have more effective support." Ultimately, attendees assented to the statement that "federal, state, and other agencies" all played important roles in supporting and elevating the family farm, but claimed that increased education and funding were needed to reap the full benefits from this way of life.[23]

Much of the discussion at the Family Farm Policy Research Conference centered on questions of tenure and the problems with agricultural systems outside the family farm model. The report did not entirely dismiss these alternatives—with the exception of collective or "state" farming—but it did caution readers about the challenges that may arise to "democratic institutions . . . and adherence to our present concepts of ethical and social values" in the event of a shift away from family farming. Particularly concerning to conference participants was the possibility that non-family "hired farm laborers may attempt to strengthen their bargaining position through unionization . . . It would be fought by agricultural employers and would result in tension, strife, and economic warfare involving serious waste to groups and cost to society." They also emphasized conventional criticisms like the lack of efficiency or interest in conservation methods among tenants and hired workers.[24]

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[23] Baldur H. Kristjanson, ed., *Issues in Family Farm Policy,* Bulletin 384 *(*Fargo: North Dakota Agricultural College Experiment Station, June 1953), 5-6, 21.
[24] Kristjanson, *Issues in Family Farm Policy,* 9-10.

Land reform took on increased importance globally in the aftermath of World War II, and US policymakers in both agriculture and foreign relations worked to shape the emerging changes abroad. Fears surrounding Soviet land reform propaganda increased the urgency of the issue. The 1950 Inter-American Conference on Agriculture at Montevideo called for every participating country to evaluate its land systems and resources to assure they were "consistent with the enhancement of democracy in agriculture." Through the vehicle of the United Nations, both USDA and USDS repeatedly pressed for prioritization and protection of small farmers in the interest of democracy.[25]

Addressing the FAO council meeting in June 1951, US Undersecretary of Agriculture McCormick spoke of the inextricable link between agricultural systems and political stability, blaming "agrarian unrest" on low standards of rural living and land tenure problems. He highlighted the secondary effects of improving a farmer's tenure position which provided greater security and incentives toward both production and conservation. He further declared that the United States intended to continue land reform at home and among US-administered territories while pursuing land reform abroad, constantly reemphasizing the threat posed by "the march of aggressive communism."[26] This unabashed declaration of American intervention clearly demonstrates the administration's twin aims of democratization and nation building conducted through the infrastructure of US agriculture policy.

Before the UN Economic and Social Council, the United States sponsored a resolution recommending "that governments institute appropriate land reform in the interest of landless, small and medium farmers." US council representative Isador Lubin argued for adoption of the

[25] US Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, *Land Reform: A World Challenge* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 1

[26] Herbert Waters to Joseph Short, with attachment, May 24, 1951, Department of Agriculture, Truman Papers, The Brannan Plan Subject File, Folder 4-2, Harry Truman Library, Independence, MO.

resolution, saying, “We in the United States recognize that the attainment of peace and stability depends to a considerable degree on immediate and positive steps to correct systems of land tenure which exploit the workers on the lands.” Secretary of State Acheson joined the chorus, holding up land reform in India, Japan, and Korea as examples of positive change, while Secretary Brannan declared that “a little bit of land” moves the soul toward peace. “It is something that happens inside a person. It is something that cannot be shot or chained.”[27]

To formalize this aim, department leaders organized the Inter-Agency Committee on Land Reform Policy chaired by USDA Undersecretary Clarence McCormick in early 1951. The organization included four regional subcommittees. All members met over a period of months to establish a policy statement that could guide work carried out by the State Department in land reform and tenure security overseas. The committee took the position, “Foreign policy, to be effective, frequently requires the support of active and progressive programs in other countries. Mere allegations against other ideologies are not enough to fulfill our positive objectives.” It went on to explain that countering Soviet land reform propaganda required the United States to offer tangible alternatives with measurable benefits to farmers living in misery.[28]

Of the committee’s two stated policy objectives, the first, most basic goal was to “improve agricultural economic institutions in order to lessen the causes of agrarian unrest and political instability.” Above all other reasons for pursuing land reform, the most important to the United States was squelching rural radicalism. The second was similar: to separate the concept of land reform from the messaging in Soviet propaganda. The statement promised “encouragement

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[27] US Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, *Land Reform: A World Challenge* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 1-3.
[28] US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy, “United States Policy Regarding land Reforms in Foreign Areas 1951* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1951), 1666-1668, http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS.FRUS1951v01.

and assistance… in both planning and administration" to bring about desirable reform. It also guaranteed support for land reform in US territories and publicity for all efforts working toward the identified objectives.[29]

Once drafted and reviewed internally, Secretary Acheson sent the policy statement to seventy overseas missions. With it, he included instructions that Foreign Service officers respond by providing any pertinent information on land reform in their area not already reported to the department along with "specific suggestions on practical application" within their assigned countries. In discussion with Undersecretary of State James Webb, Assistant Secretary of State Willard Thorp noted "considerable pressure for doing something with respect to land reform." Though conversation within the department included a few dissenters who found land reform relatively less important, the majority consensus determined to prioritize the policy as a key concern of both the department and the administration.[30]

Truman made clear his own vision for land reform as a tool of democratization both domestically and internationally when he said, "Every farmer has a desire to own and operate his own farm. The desire to cultivate his own land is one of the oldest and strongest desires of man. Land ownership is an essential element of our form of representative government. It is a policy of this government, therefore, to encourage the ownership of land both at home and abroad."[31] In light of this statement, USDA's OFAR dedicated the entire September 1951 issue of *Foreign Agriculture* exclusively to the subject of land reform abroad. The journal provided several case studies of countries that had successfully instituted land reform policies, some under direct US supervision. It concluded with a piece called "Frontiers for Land Reform" which outlined places

[29] USDS, *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1667-1671.
[30] USDS, *Foreign Relations of the United States,* 1667-1671.
[31] Harry S. Truman, "Statement on Land Reform," *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 9, (September 1951): back cover.

then ripe for similar intervention. In each case, authors positioned such intervention as an immediate foil to communist propaganda and revolt.[32]

The example of US-led land reform in occupied Japan provided an ideal model according to Wolf Ladejinsky, the American agricultural attaché in Tokyo. Designed to "improve the farmers' lot and to make rural Japan practically impervious to communism," he declared the program a complete success. Ladejinsky's article provided extensive detail on the process of transitioning Japan from concentrated landlord wealth—which, he explained, created a "seething cauldron of unrest"—to a countryside of small freeholders. The program began when General MacArthur issued his land reform directive on December 15, 1945. From there, the Agricultural Division of the Natural Resources Section under the office of Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers helped to draft a series of policies that made up the Agrarian Reform Program, officially passed by the Japanese Diet in October 1946.[33]

Financial arrangements, administration, and enforcement would be carried out entirely by local Japanese authorities, and Japanese land commissions provided paths for appeal. A quick sketch of the plan reveals that the Japanese government sought to purchase five million acres of land from landlords— roughly eighty percent of all land under tenant cultivation—which would then be partitioned and resold. Active tenants received priority for these purchases. All buyers benefited from favorable lending terms that allowed for up to 30 year mortgages at a fixed 3.2 percent interest rate. Ladejinsky cheered that the commissions had completed all land transfers by the end of 1949 and registered all new titles by March 1950 "without the shedding of blood, pillage, or a yen's worth of damage."[34]

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[32] *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 9, (September 1951): 182-203.
[33] Wolf Ladejinsky, "Japan's Land Reform," *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 9, (September 1951): 187-8.
[34] Ladejinsky, "Japan's Land Reform," 188.

In her concluding piece for this thematic journal issue, Theodora Carlson, an Information Specialist in OFAR's Division of Foreign Agricultural Information, wrote of the conditions and possibilities in each major world region for proposed land reform efforts. She particularly highlighted positive steps that could be initiated through the Point Four program and cautioned of danger zones which needed increased attention. Carlson linked the "relatively benign" pattern of tenancy in Indonesia to the article on historic Dutch land reform appearing earlier in the publication. She wrote of emerging legislation in Burma which, though hampered by ongoing civil war, aimed to excise absentee Indian landlords and abolish tenancy altogether. She also pointed to new maximum rent laws on rice lands in Thailand and wrote encouragingly of Pakistan's Muslim League favoring reform efforts. Still, Carlson reminded readers there was much work to be done.[35]

On the whole, the journal took the position that any remaining countries with insecure tenure systems risked an "Achilles' heel" which was "adroitly exploit[ed] by communist propaganda." Such land arrangements, they argued, were "nearly always the most provocative cause of the agrarian discontent and therefore, potentially the most explosive." Authors acknowledged that the West experienced similar challenges many years earlier and emphasized the supportive role that scientific and technological advances played in nineteenth century land reform in Europe. In the post-war world, OFAR hoped to accomplish this same symbiosis by joining their promotion of land reform with Point Four aid abroad.[36]

To encourage these reforms on a global scale, US leaders arranged a Conference on World Land Tenure Problems at the University of Wisconsin from October 8 through November

[35] Theodora E. Carlson, "Frontiers for Land Reform," *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 9, (September 1951): 202-203.
[36] Lazar Volin, "The Long Drawn Question," *Foreign Agriculture* 15, no. 9, (September 1951): 183-186.

20, 1951. The Point Four Technical Cooperation Administration within USDS, the newly constituted Mutual Security Agency, and the US Department of Agriculture jointly sponsored the program. In addition to planning and organizing the extended conference, the agencies provided funding for the majority of foreign attendees. In partnership with the University of Wisconsin, they also created a special library of collected works on land tenure challenges and history. Eighty delegates came from thirty-nine countries to participate in extensive discussion about land tenure and field trips to US farm and production sites. These excursions were typically led by extension agents or experts from the universities. The end of the conference culminated in a cross-country road trip to agricultural colleges throughout the Midwest and the South, then finally to Washington, DC, where attendees visited USDA's main experiment station, stopped in at their home country embassies, and met with President Truman.[37]

In his speech to the conference delegates, Technical Cooperation Administrator Henry Bennett reviewed nearly two centuries of US land policy, humbly acknowledging significant failures that contributed to agricultural depression and Dust Bowl desolation. He identified with the struggles in the home countries of his audience, but his message was largely an aspirational one, declaring the purpose of his Point Four agency "to help dignify agriculture so that the millions of people who live on and work the land will not only produce abundantly but enjoy the fruits of their labor." Bennett laid out an American land tenure model for his listeners to take home with them. He encouraged the adoption of government sponsored credit programs to transform tenants into owners and the implementation of extension and conservation to ensure

[37] *We Talked About Land and People: Report on the Conference on World Land Tenure Problems* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1951), 2-15.

timely repayment. Above all, he emphasized the democratic progress and economic growth that could follow reform.[38]

Reports from the conference workshops demonstrate the widely varying obstacles to tenure reform around the world. According to the representative from Libya, inheritance law proved particularly troubling for its tendency to result in increasingly fractional parcels of land. An English delegate echoed these concerns, including a discussion about rent owed to siblings and other family members. Conference participants cited many challenges to reform, but they also encouraged creative solutions with cultural and even religious answers to some of the most pressing issues. Comments by Zahid Husain of Pakistan invoked passages from the Quran to illuminate its condemnation of usury and advocate for improvements like land reform to pursue an interest-free society.[39]

Workshop report appendices contained extensive propaganda prepared for countries to translate or use as inspiration for their own land reform literature campaigns. Some had already been used in completed programs, while others were designed by committees at the conference. The *ABCs of Land Reform*—distributed to six million Japanese farmers in 1947—outlined that plan through a simple question and answer format. It emphasized that the program would ensure "all farmers would then be able to enjoy the fruits of their labor."[40] Propaganda products from the conference included hand-sketched posters depicting farmers toiling in poverty under the old system while their post-reform counterparts wore new clothes and drove tractors. Delegates also

[38] US Department of State, Office of Public Affairs, *Land Reform: A World Challenge* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1952), 67-69.
[39] Zahid Husain, "The Problems of Interest in an Islamic State" *Conference on World Land Tenure Problems: Workshop Reports* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), 177.
[40] *Conference on World Land Tenure Problems: Workshop Reports*, 487.

designed radio scripts, illustrated leaflets, and even flannelgraphs in their attempt to win over rural populations worldwide.[41]

Once the holidays had passed, 1952's unruly election season transformed Truman into a lame duck earlier than anticipated. Following his loss in the New Hampshire primary on March 11, he bowed out of the race. Despite Truman's crashing approval rate and electoral hardship, his administration continued to vigorously pursue the Point Four program and domestic agricultural initiatives for the duration of his term. Point Four participating countries increased, as did the staffs in place in those already receiving support. By mid-1952, the program had 302 personnel serving in agricultural placements and 100 serving in education with 500 more in sanitation and other fields. The Technical Cooperation Administration also brought 409 trainees to the United States for further education in US practices.[42]

During the campaign, Republican presidential hopefuls faced sharp critiques from Democratic lawmakers on their plans for agriculture's persistent hardship. In a speech to thousands of attendees at the Nash Harvest festival, Franklin Roosevelt Jr. accused both Eisenhower and his primary opponent Robert Taft of "putting a price tag on my freedom" and thundered, "I'd rather have high taxes, prevent World War III, and be able to pay taxes, than go back to 1932!"[43] North Carolina Governor Kerr Scott donned a well-worn cowboy hat and rode the festival parade route in a Hoover Cart to drive the message home. Roosevelt Jr's speech embraced the same rhetoric the Truman administration used to sell Point Four and family farm policy reform, that of containing the spread of communism across the globe. The younger

[41] *Conference on World Land Tenure Problems: Workshop Reports*, 486-510.
[42] Technical Cooperation Administration, *Monthly Point Four Summary* (Washington, DC: Department of State Public Affairs Office, June 18, 1952), 1-2.
[43] Charles Craven, "'32 Depression, '52 Prosperity" *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), October 11, 1952, 1; Demont Roseman, "Roosevelt and Scott Speak at Annual Harvest Festival" *The Evening Telegram* (Rocky Mount, NC), October 11, 1952, 1-2.

Roosevelt declared, “The best way to lick communism is to never go back to the chaos of depression . . . that's where people lose hope . . . where they are driven to despair. If ever we were on the brink of revolution, it was at the time of this despair. The best way to prevent revolution is to be strong within.” [44]

Eisenhower understood the importance of countering this criticism—Republicans having learned a lesson in courting the Midwestern farm vote in 1948. He labeled Truman’s style “fear rule” while offering his own farm aid plan which he titled the “honest deal.” His plan included a revised farm credit apparatus to be run by a board selected from farmers themselves. This, he assured listeners on the campaign trail, would protect farmers “without putting them in federal chains.”[45] Eisenhower repeatedly invoked the Brannan Plan as evidence of Democrats’ inability to address farm problems of the day, contrasting it with the Republican approach which he promised would be built on a guarantee of consistency.[46]

Following Eisenhower’s victory in November, he quickly incorporated agriculture into his policy agenda. The newly inaugurated President’s first State of the Union address included much discussion about the steady decline of farm prices in an otherwise inflationary period, but it did not immediately seek to undo policies already in place. Instead, Eisenhower made specific note of the 1954 expiration date in the price-support farm bill and spoke of developing policy for 1955 and beyond. He also committed to strengthening export relationships, conducting extensive research, establishing rural credit mechanisms, and expanding rural electrification and soil conservation programs. Of course, these aims were contextualized by his stated intent to

[44] Roseman, “Roosevelt and Scott Speak at Annual Harvest Festival.”
[45] John C. O’Brien, “Eisenhower Hits ‘Fear Rule’” *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* September 19, 1952, 1.
[46] Jack Bell, “Eisenhower Stresses ‘Consistent’ Farm Program in Minnesota,” *Fort Worth Star Telegram,* September 16, 1952, 4.

"minimize governmental interference in the farmers' affairs," yet they remained federal pursuits nonetheless.[47]

Just over one week later, the new Secretary of Agriculture, Ezra T. Benson, delivered a much-discussed address at the annual convention of the Central Livestock Association in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Benson echoed Eisenhower's promises to faithfully administer the current price support legislation and to simultaneously complete a total reevaluation of each existing program. He emphasized self-reliance and rural freedom as "the strongest bulwark we have against all that is aimed, not only at weakening, but at the very destruction of our American way of life" and reminded his listeners of the administration's belief that "the supreme test of any government policy, agricultural or otherwise, should be 'How will it affect the character, morale, and well-being of our people?'"[48]

Eisenhower and Benson favored a flexible price support system which they believed would create less incentive for overproduction, but throughout 1953 the administration continued to emphasize that "farm policy is a legislative function not an executive one."[49] By the end of the year, however, this deference to Congress began to wane. Cabinet meeting minutes from December 1953 reveal the administration's working plan for a new agricultural policy and directly address the rhetorical skill needed to rally support for such a proposal given the president's campaign promise to keep existing laws in effect until they reached their established expiration dates. Much of the plan focused on adjusting price supports and acreage restrictions,

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[47] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *State of the Union Address*, 83rd Cong. 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 99, pt. 1: 751-752.
[48] Ezra T. Benson, "Progress and New Hope for the Nation," 83rd Cong. 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 99, pt. 1: 1187-1189.
[49] Ezra T. Benson, "America: A Choice Land, Speech before the National Conference of Christians and Jews, May 11, 1953" Ezra T. Benson Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

but points nine and ten listed greater reliance on research and education and special consideration of low income farmers and laborers respectively.[50]

At the outset of the 1954 midterm election year, Eisenhower delivered his special agricultural message to Congress, in which he outlined the policies his administration had been developing throughout his first twelve months in office. Here, he revealed the "most thorough and comprehensive study ever made of the farm problem and of governmental farm programs."[51] Eisenhower bemoaned the massive surpluses stockpiled by the Commodity Credit Corporation, but committed himself to the principle that food which had already been produced should never be destroyed. Instead, he called for its creative removal from commerce for the benefit of both the United States and friendly nations abroad.

Congress enacted this plan with Public Law 480, the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act or, more formally, "An Act to increase the consumption of United States agricultural commodities in foreign countries, to improve the foreign relations of the United States, and for other purposes." Those "other purposes" bore great importance for the passing and signing of the act. A plainly stated goal of P.L. 480 was to remove surpluses from US markets and the law specifically outlined pathways to draw down the stores of the Commodity Credit Corporation. The application of these surpluses, however, directly in international famine relief, as payment for international purchases, and as foreign aid generally, reveals another agenda pursued by this legislation. As with most programs in US policy history, P.L. 480 served many masters.[52]

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[50] Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, December 11, 1953, Cabinet Files, Box 2, Folder 12.11.1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.
[51] Dwight D. Eisenhower, Special Agriculture Message, 83rd Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 100, pt. 1: 130.
[52] Pub. L. No 480, 68 Stat. 454 (1954).

Officials within the State Department noted potential for trade disruption in the design of P.L. 480 and reported grumbling about it from several US allies and trading partners. Some, like Australia, even suggested they might withdraw from the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) if their agricultural interests were not protected in the plan's execution. According to the US delegation to the ninth session of that organization, all agricultural countries within GATT expressed similar reservations. They feared that 480 would serve, first and foremost, as a mechanism of surplus dumping in world markets. The act's partial administration by an organization titled the Interagency Committee on Agricultural Surplus Disposal (ICASD) further highlights this function. Despite these realities, P.L. 480 simultaneously served a distinct purpose of democratization and diplomacy even within the context of ICASD's focus.[53]

A confidential memo distributed to Eisenhower's cabinet under cover of a note from the cabinet secretary provided a policy review of P.L. 480 performed by ICASD. This memo examined the challenges that could arise from the sale of agricultural produce that might "find its way to the Soviet Bloc." The committee listed only two reasons for possible opposition to such sales. The first—immediately discounted—was that such goods should not be sold at a loss. The second concerned the "adverse public reaction if the US sold butter to Russia at a price below that paid by American housewives." The committee weighed this possibility and determined that "the judgement of the American people" could suffice to overcome this hurdle. Discussing the memo at the December 17th cabinet meeting, Vice President Nixon asserted that the time was right for progress in trade in the "Iron Curtain countries." He counseled that once the US crossed the initial trade barrier, the controversy would subside. President Eisenhower agreed,

[53] United States Delegation to the Ninth Session of the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade message to the Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: General, 1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1954), 214-217.

acknowledging that "the United States undertakes spiritual, military, and material programs in foreign affairs" and that these are appropriate in pursuit of an American advantage.[54]

Fulfilling another key aim of the program, Public Law 480 also facilitated currency convertibility, which had stalled in the aftermath of World War II. By allowing recipient countries to purchase American produce with their own currencies, and keeping those monies within their borders for US purchases of local goods, the recipient nations could use what foreign exchange they did possess for other necessary imports. These local currency sales, also referred to as Title I sales, constituted the majority of all P.L. 480 distribution in the early years of the program.[55]

Between 1955 and 1957, program exports increased dramatically from about two thousand metric tons to about fourteen thousand. A dip in exports the following spring preceded a steep climb to nearly seventeen thousand metric tons in the 1960 election cycle. Senator and presidential hopeful Hubert Humphrey helped drive this increase with the release of his report titled "Food and Fiber as a Force for Freedom" in April 1958. The resulting debates around P.L. 480's purpose and execution significantly color both its contemporary perception and historical recollection. Humphrey held hearings on the program and gathered testimony from seventy-one witnesses before he reached the conclusion that P.L. 480 was a good program not being fully utilized by the current administration. He called for the agricultural export plan to secure "nothing less than world peace," and described the results of its first several years with moving

[54] Paper Prepared by the Interagency Committee on Agricultural Surplus Disposal, *Foreign Relations of the United States: General, 1954* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1954), 221-222; Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting Held at the White House, 9:05am, December 17, 1954, *Foreign Relations of the United States: General, 1954* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1954), 223-226.
[55] For a thorough description of this process in action, see Congressional Research Service, *Primer on P.L. 480—Program History, Description, and Operations: A Brief Compilation of Explanatory Documents*, by Susan B. Epstein, 84-803ENR (1984), 2-4.

stories like "a child in India [who] would put his finger into the butter oil and taste it, and say with a very loving sound in his voice—'America'. That is how they know America." He celebrated the six million children in Japan receiving school lunch and the expansion of railways in Brazil each as the product of thoughtfully distributed P.L. 480 resources.[56]

Humphrey's report also detailed the application of foreign currencies earned from surplus crop sales within their respective countries. $249.5 million in foreign currency became defense expenditures in places like Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Iran, and Bolivia. US-run schools and libraries received over $12 million, and foreign educational exchanges to "promote better world understanding" received $23.2 million. Even the translation and distribution of US books abroad benefited from $5 million. The Commodity Credit Corporation received no reimbursement for any of these expenditures. Instead, the use of earned foreign currency for projects within recipient nations demonstrated America's commitment to the aid mission and currency stabilization pursuit that underlay this legislation.[57]

Humphrey made eight general recommendations to conclude his findings, with the first calling for greater emphasis from the executive branch on P.L. 480 as a tool of foreign policy. He also suggested the establishment of a "Peace Food Administrator" to serve as a special assistant to the president. His argument invoked the War Food Administration of World War II and declared that the "all-out cold war" demanded no less vigilant a defense of freedom by US agriculture. Several pages of additional recommendations further critiqued the program's execution from USDA to the congressional Armed Services Committee to USDS. Humphrey

[56] Hubert Humphrey, *Food and Fiber as a Force for Freedom A Report,* report prepared to the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry of the United States Senate, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958, Committee Print, 1-4.
[57] Hubert Humphrey, *Food and Fiber as a Force for Freedom,* 25-28.

hoped for significant expansion of aid under P.L 480. Contrary to Humphrey's assertions, Eisenhower already supported this agenda—he simply did so on his own terms.

When the president delivered his next special message on agriculture to Congress in January 1959, he called for a further enlargement of the P.L. 480 initiative in partnership with other "surplus-producing" nations. This program, he argued, had "immediate and direct bearing on world peace." Eisenhower described food as a powerful tool for use toward the aims of "reinforcing peace and the well-being of friendly peoples throughout the world" and reflected proudly on the four billion dollars in agricultural produce the United States exported throughout the four years of the program's existence. In this message, the president introduced the banner "food for peace" and reemphasized his administration's commitment to its goals.[58]

Despite this reassurance from the executive branch, Senator Humphrey and his supporters remained unconvinced. Humphrey thus proposed several amendments to P.L. 480 and launched Senate hearings on his bill, this time conducted by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee to emphasize their focus. The bill went by the name "The International Food for Peace Act" and played heavily on the "moral intolerability" of global hunger and suffering. It utilized language reminiscent of the Truman administration, decrying the specter of communism to which starving nations might be forced to turn without increased American assistance and support.[59]

Both USDA and USDS submitted letters of opposition to this legislation, taking issue with its proposed establishment of a new Peace Food Administrator position within the executive branch and its maximum interest rates, among other provisions. Some of their criticism, however, stemmed from the fact that the administration was already engaged in several of the

[58] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Special Message to the Congress on Agriculture,* 86th Cong., 1st Sess., 1959, H. Doc. 59.
[59] *International Food for Peace Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate,* 86th Cong., 1st Sess., on S. 1711, 1959, Committee Print, 1-2.

practices specified in the bill. These included pursuing supply commitments with recipient nations lasting longer than one year as well as the more nebulous commitment to "maximiz[ing] the utilization of our surpluses." Acting Agriculture Secretary True D. Morse's letter even went so far as to support some provisions of Humphrey's program. Morse wrote in favor of the Title V section which proposed establishing national food reserves in underdeveloped countries, and of the bill's recommended export of edible oils when available. In the Senate, Humphrey successfully negotiated a three year extension of the program and a $4.5 billion authorization for foreign currency sales with a vote of 47-38 over Eisenhower's one year, $1.5 billion request, garnering the support of several Republicans who hailed from farm states. His other measures—including a proposed food stamp plan—failed by even closer margins. The final amendments, enacted September 21, 1959, represented a compromise between both interests. They extended the program through 1961 and incorporated new language like the intent to "promote and support programs of medical and scientific research, cultural and educational development, health, nutrition, and sanitation."[60]

Later that year, Eisenhower further expounded upon his philosophy for the program when he delivered the opening address at the World Agriculture Fair in New Delhi. He introduced the theme of the US exhibit: "Food-Family-Friendship-Freedom," which emphasized the critical connection between food and mankind's battle against tyranny. The exhibit made the case for utilizing agriculture as a tool for world peace. Eisenhower expressly linked this to his own special message on agriculture delivered to Congress in January. He further connected the theme

[60] William B. Macomber, Jr. to Senator J.W. Fulbright, *Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations United States Senate,* 86th Cong., 1st Sess., on S. 1711, 1959, Committee Print, 8-10; "U.S. Senate Pushes for Adjournment" *The Indiana Gazette* (Indiana, PA), September 5, 1959, 5; An Act to amend the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act of 1954, and for other purposes, 73 Stat. 606 (1959).

to his administration's use of P.L. 480 and his commitment to partner with other "surplus-producing nations…in the interest of reinforcing peace and the well-being of free peoples throughout the world…using food for peace."[61]

For every person who crafted or executed the legislation, P.L. 480's primary purpose stood somewhere on a spectrum between the two extremes of exclusively surplus dumping and purely humanitarian aid. Both sides embraced it as practical anti-communist foreign policy. Like so many others, Eisenhower's position on this spectrum shifted over time. Some policymakers' shifts represented pragmatic political calculations, while others resulted from worsening Cold War tension and changes in the international context. Perhaps some even took hold for purely personal reasons, but by 1959 the administration's intentions were clear. Despite surface differences in tone and branding, the aims of Eisenhower's newly christened "Food For Peace" program were substantively aligned in both ends and means with those demonstrated by his predecessor in Point Four.

Eisenhower and Agriculture Domestically

While P.L 480 worked to address the international crisis and promote US foreign policy interests in the fight against communism, the Eisenhower administration recognized the negligible impact the program had on small family farms domestically. In addition to his global efforts, Eisenhower prioritized programs to reshape lower-income farming throughout his presidency. A return to his January 1954 special agricultural message reveals a separate but parallel emphasis on research and education, and a special note of the 3.5 million small farms which saw little benefit from existing price support legislation. For this group, the president

[61] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Remarks at the Opening of the World Agriculture Fair in New Delhi, The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/234915.*

charged Secretary Benson—in partnership with the National Agricultural Advisory Commission—to examine and plan for their "peculiar" hardship.[62]

Undersecretary of Agriculture True D. Morse spent the next year supervising economists and researchers at USDA as they conducted this examination. The results of their work laid the foundation for Eisenhower's Rural Development Program in a report titled *Development of Agriculture's Human Resources.* Eisenhower's accompanying Letter of Transmittal explained that low-income family farms could not participate fully in American progress, whether economic or social. He argued that their diminished participation created a system of apathy which harmed the nation as a whole. To combat this problem, he insisted, "a many-sided attack is essential. We need an integrated program in which each part contributes to the whole."[63]

Like its predecessors, this administration did not intend to abide the farming of pitifully impoverished plots in the land of agrarian democracy. The report's content detailed extensively what forms this "many-sided attack" might take, both for the interests of impoverished farmers and for the nation at large. It touted successes in the preceding years from farm research to health service to rural employment but found such initiatives "insufficient" and "not fully coordinated." Though Eisenhower and Benson had argued at length for a less intrusive farm policy in 1952 and 1953, the results of the 1954 elections—in which Democrats regained control of both houses in Congress—demanded a new approach. The report's most prominent feature was the establishment of a pilot program for rural development in at least fifty of the 1,000 US counties designated as rural low-income. It called for the incorporation of fifteen elements to ensure holistic address of the problem, including expanded extension work, additional credit,

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[62] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Special Message on Agriculture*, Cong. Rec. 83rd Cong. 2nd sess. 100 pt. 1, 132.
[63] Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Message from the President of the United States Relative to the Development of Agriculture's Human Resources: A Report on Problems of Low-Income Farmers,* 84th Cong. 1st Sess., 1955, H. Doc 149, III.

employment services through the Department of Labor, expanded vocational training through the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), incentivizing development of rural healthcare systems, and increased funding and eligibility for the Farmer's Home Administration. It then suggested that all of these be brought together under the leadership and control of the Secretary of Agriculture and his designee.[64]

The report relied on data gathered from across the country to demonstrate a variety of hardships plaguing low-income farmers. Some of these, such as lower educational attainment, were likely expected. Others revealed ways in which existing programs failed to reach this particular group. Low-income farmers, for example, used extension guidance at dramatically lower rates than their wealthier counterparts. They also experienced less communication with agricultural agency representatives and had fewer opportunities for participation in farm meetings. In many of these metrics, low-income farmers participated at rates more than seventy percent below large operators. To remedy this problem, Morse and his team called for the designation of special extension funds in each county pilot program. These would be used to target the underserved farm population and to help establish broadly representative Community Development Committees that could help advocate for them going forward. [65]

Following the release of the report, representatives from each of the relevant federal departments gathered with leaders from twenty-eight land-grant colleges at a conference in Memphis, Tennessee, to craft a design for the program. Federal attendees included the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare. Participants examined questions relating to the structure and organization of the developing enterprise. Nationally, Undersecretary of Agriculture True D. Morse served in the position of program

[64] Eisenhower, *Agriculture's Human Resources,* VI-VII.
[65] Eisenhower, *Agriculture's Human Resources,* 15-17.

coordinator, and two committees gathered under his leadership to provide the federal framework. The Interdepartmental Committee included the undersecretaries of each of the federal executive departments present at the conference, with the addition of Interior. Secondarily, the Agency Committee brought together those within the Department of Agriculture, including the Agricultural Research Service, FHA, Soil Conservation, Federal Extension, Forest Service, Agricultural Marketing, REA, and others. To build administrative layers beneath these committees, conference participants suggested deputizing the Dean of the School of Agriculture at each state's land-grant college to serve as state coordinator, while county leadership was left to the determination of the state committee.[66]

On August 11, 1955, Congress approved an amendment to the Smith-Lever Act that formally established the rural development pilot program through the machinery of federal extension. The legislation substantiated the report findings that certain areas faced "disadvantage insofar as agricultural development is concerned" and, as a result of small or unproductive acreages, could not participate in the benefits of existing extension programs. With the stated purpose of "encourage[ing] complimentary development essential to the welfare of such areas," Congress established a separate appropriation under Smith-Lever to be disbursed by the Secretary of Agriculture in support of intensive on-farm training, resource counseling, employment assistance, and relocation and new farm aid. The amendment specified that funding should be granted in addition to existing appropriations under the act at a maximum rate of ten percent of the annual Smith-Lever appropriation.[67]

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[66] Ezra T. Benson, *Progress in the Rural Development Program: First Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture.* (Washington, DC: Department of Agriculture, September 1956), 4; *Summary of Discussions: Conference on Rural Development Program, Memphis, Tennessee, June 7-8, 1955* (Washington, DC: Federal Extension Service, 1955), National Agricultural Library.

[67] *An Act to Amend Public Law 83, Eighty-third Congress,* Pub. L. 360, 69 Stat. 683, (1955).

Once formalized, the Rural Development Program expanded quickly as many counties across the country sought pilot status. Some areas with local development initiatives already in place also applied for inclusion in the program, and grumbled angrily about receiving "short shrift" when the secretary denied their petitions because of their previous success. By the end of the program's first fiscal year, it included five federal departments and fifty-four counties in twenty-four states. Secretary Benson called this first year one of impressive progress toward the long-term aims of "better farming and homemaking…increased education, improved health and family welfare, [and] greater participation in community life."[68]

Both the congressional enactment and USDA's implementation of the program demonstrate an intent to influence something more than commodity production. The report revealed that most of these farmers, fully twenty-seven percent of American farm families, barely participated in commodity markets at all. Still, a Republican administration and Democratic Congress came together in a bipartisan initiative to improve the quality of life of these 1.5 million rural households. The Rural Development Program of the Eisenhower administration represented further crystallization of a holistic rural policy that harkened back to the ideas espoused by Theodore Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life. In fact, once the program was in place, lawmakers saw such parallels between the two that the Subcommittee on Family Farms in the House Committee on Agriculture proposed a bill to create a new Commission on Country Life fifty years after that directed by Liberty Hyde Bailey.[69]

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[68] "Another Kind of Study in Order," *Post-Herald* (Beckley, WV), January 1, 1956, 6; Ezra T. Benson, to Dwight D. Eisenhower, accompanying *Progress in the Rural Development Program: First Annual Report of the Secretary of Agriculture.* (Washington, DC: Department of Agriculture, September 1956).
[69] USDA, *Development of Agriculture's Human Resources: A Report on Problems of Low-Income Farmers,* 84th Cong. 1st Sess., 1955, H. Doc 149, 1; US Congress, House, Subcommittee on Family Farms of the Committee on Agriculture, 85th Cong. 2nd Sess., 1958, 1-144.

The inclusion of federal executive departments beyond Agriculture helped augment the reshaping of rural communities. Within the original framework of the Rural Development Program, Commerce helped promote industrial relocation to low-income rural zones; Labor provided a "nation-wide public employment service" for farm families in need; HEW offered vocational rehabilitation and community health support; and Interior expanded fish and wildlife services to supplement poor diets and provide additional sources of income in participating regions.[70]

Three years later, when Eisenhower permanently ensconced the Committee for Rural Development Program by way of Executive Order 10847, these offerings had increased exponentially. In the committee's program handbook published in late 1959, general efforts in "community health support" gave way to specific programs for rehabilitation of disabled farmers, hospital and clinic construction, and food distribution. Vocational training options expanded to include nursing, distribution, and industrial trades. Even watershed projects and river development appeared among the new services. Whatever hesitancy and debate may have preceded the program, it became a wholesale attack on rural poverty and suffering in fewer than five years.[71]

Historiographically, Eisenhower revisionism has long-since corrected the narrative of the do-nothing president, but a deeper examination of his administration's agriculture policy reveals striking similarities with that of his predecessor. Truman and Eisenhower both sought to use agriculture as a tool of peace internationally. Both converted US farm produce into a weapon of

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[70] US Department of Agriculture, *Rural Development Program Guide: Organization and Objectives, Supporting Government Services* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1956), 7-23.
[71] James C. Hagerty, Press Secretary to the President, Press Release, File 3299-2-2 Records of the Secretary of Agriculture, RG 16, National Archives at College Park, MD; United States Department of Agriculture, *Rural Development Program Handbook: Program Objectives, Organization, Community Leadership Supporting Services* (Washington, DC: Committee for Rural Development Program, 1959).

containment against the spread of communism. Both pursued radical improvements in the living conditions of rural Americans, reminiscent of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission. When viewed alongside one another in the context of their Executive Departments and contemporary Congresses, it becomes clear that both wielded a progressive agriculture policy to promote democratization and to reinforce a national identity shaped by the Jeffersonian ideal, first domestically, then around the world.[72]

[72] Stephen G. Rabe "Eisenhower Revisionism: A Decade of Scholarship." *Diplomatic History* 17, no. 1 (1993): 97-115, accessed August 7, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/24912261.

CHAPTER 6: FARM POLICY FOR THE NEW FRONTIER & THE GREAT SOCIETY

The Kennedy and Johnson administrations of the 1960s presided over the final realization of US agricultural policy's long pursuit of democratization and national identity. So much had changed, but much work remained. The ongoing Cold War prompted even greater involvement in agriculture abroad, while rural poverty at home continued to plague government leaders on both sides of the aisle. Support for rural intervention reached a crescendo even as rural communities morphed into something significantly less agricultural in nature. Here, policymakers pursued rural land reform on a global scale. Here, they remade diets and nutrition standards among American and foreign farm families alike. Here, officials at State and at USDA argued plainly that only the Jeffersonian model—enacted by Hamiltonian means—could squelch agrarian uprising and preserve freedom around the world.

Before John F. Kennedy faced off against Richard Nixon in the election of 1960, the junior senator from Massachusetts had already demonstrated an interest in rural and agricultural policy, both domestically and as a tool of foreign policy. By the time he took to the stump, Kennedy had formulated his own vision for rural reform in the US and offered a rousing rendition of his agriculture plan at the National Plowing Contest in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Given that farm prices had continued their downward trajectory throughout the preceding decade, his emphasis on production management and parity prices logically followed. But Kennedy also placed great importance on the expansion of the Food for Peace program, the newly reinstituted food stamp program, national school lunch, and rural development. He connected each of these to his call to the New Frontier.

Kennedy attempted to draw lines of demarcation between his agenda and that of Vice President Nixon, yet much of his message directly invoked previous efforts by USDA and

programs already enacted by the Congress he served in. Rural poverty also carried significant importance for the campaign, and Kennedy promoted the expansion of research, extension, rural credit, REA services, and government marketing in addition to unnamed but vigorous government action in hopes of solving this "entirely different farm problem." Kennedy certainly understood the similarities of language between his program and that of his opponent. In an attempt to distinguish the Democratic farm platform from the programs already in existence, he relied on rhetorical censure, calling Eisenhower's Rural Development Program "timid and fruitless."[1]

Kennedy's description sounds like a harsh critique, until one realizes that Vice President Nixon said the very same of his own administration's agriculture program just six days prior. "We have got to try some new approaches," Nixon insisted. "We can't just dig in the trenches we have been in for the past seven years… and then keep fastened on the farmer something that is wrong." Nixon did not shy away from acknowledging the ongoing farm crisis and, given the political climate, pursued the only course that might help secure electoral victory. This involved, namely, heading off his opposition by coopting their messaging.[2]

Nixon's campaign speech at the annual plowing contest in Guthrie Center, Iowa, emphasized his concern for the American family farmer. He encouraged a shift in thinking about the "farm problem," distancing himself from the current administration of which he was a part. Instead of seeing the challenges, he called on his listeners to see the surplus as an exciting opportunity. Nixon then detailed a four point plan for surplus disposal he called "Operation Consume." Its first point included the dramatic and immediate increase of food distribution

[1] John F. Kennedy, Speech at the National Plowing Contest (Sioux Falls, SD), The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/274459.
[2] Richard Nixon, Speech at the 21st Annual Plowing Contest (Guthrie Center, IA), The American Presidency Project https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/273959

under P.L. 480. He followed that with proposals for a strategic food reserve, in-kind payments for participation in land conservation, and a conversion of surplus grains into protein for use at home and abroad.[3]

When both major parties campaign for president with nearly identical plans for a significant sector of the US economy, the national mood appears indisputable. Almost everyone supported some expansion of P.L. 480, all saw the need for intervention on behalf of America's most impoverished rural families, and all deeply valued the agrarian ideal that so characterized American national identity from the very beginning. Each candidate's platform reflected this reality.

Of course, such similarities pushed the two candidates to work extensively to differentiate their programs. Both spoke at length on the subject of the farm problem, which Kennedy called "the greatest domestic challenge facing the next president."[4] To further clarify his position, the Kennedy campaign published a fourteen page pamphlet titled *Agricultural Policy for the New Frontier* and used it to outline his philosophy on farming that underlay his policy agenda. The document opened by identifying two fundamental goals of food and agriculture, on which it claimed all Americans could agree. The first of these was assuring abundant production sufficient both to fill the needs of all Americans and "to implement a positive foreign policy which will combat famine, contribute to the economic development of the underdeveloped world, and lay the foundations of world peace." Kennedy asserted that high consumption would follow an expanded school lunch program, the elevation of national nutrition standards, and greater provision of foods for low income, ill, and handicapped Americans across

[3] Nixon, Speech at the 21st Annual Plowing Contest.
[4] John F. Kennedy, Speech to the Young Democrats State Convention Banquet, Racine, Wisconsin, March 19, 1960, Box 1028, Folder 12, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Presidential Campaign Files, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

the country. The second goal assured the family farmer a fair return for his labor and equality with those of "similar resources in non-farm employments" given the family farm's role as an "indispensable social unit of American rural life, and as the economic base for towns and cities in rural areas."[5]

The program specifics listed in the pamphlet attempted to distinguish between the agricultural policies of Kennedy and Nixon. Kennedy pushed not only for immediate implementation of the existing food stamp program but also for its expansion and permanence, separate from surplus availability. He called for additional work in national diet improvements and for rural development in housing and farm acquisition to ensure the longevity of the family farm model. Kennedy also campaigned heavily on the broadening of P.L. 480 as a tool of Cold War diplomacy. His three-step agenda for that program incorporated the establishment of grain storage abroad, the loosening of restrictions on foreign currency usage from Title I sales, and the inclusion of other surplus-producing nations interested in "the economic and social development of the free world."[6]

One week before the election, Kennedy formed a Food for Peace Committee to examine the status and impact of P.L. 480 and to make policy suggestions for his potential administration to implement the following year. That committee delivered its report to the President-Elect on January 19, 1961, emphasizing the inadequate caloric availability across much of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and the relatively small dollar value of exports made under the program in

[5] John F. Kennedy, *Agricultural Policy for the New Frontier,* Box 1028, Folder 1, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Presidential Campaign Files, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.
[6] John F. Kennedy, Speech to the Young Democrats State Convention Banquet, Racine, Wisconsin, March 19, 1960, Box 1028, Folder 12, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Presidential Campaign Files, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

the 1960 fiscal year. According to the report, agricultural exports for that year totaled $4.5 billion, the second highest total in US history. Of that, $3.1 billion sold for dollar return, most of which came in the form of straight (unsubsidized) commercial transactions. Special Exports, carried out almost entirely under the authority of P.L. 480, made up the remaining $1.4 billion. The committee recommended a clear declaration of philosophy by the President-Elect to distinguish his vision for the program from the outgoing administration's. Their suggested statement read:

> Food, to satisfy hunger, and fiber, to clothe the needy, are the most elementary necessities, without which man is incapable of moving on to higher forms of satisfaction and fulfillment. United States agricultural productive capacity is the nation's most precious treasure, the result of favorable climate, the industry of our farmers, the achievements of our science and technology. The production of food and fiber is what we do best in the world. It is the aim of the United States to put this agricultural capacity to the fullest use to meet human need, and promote human advancement and development, both at home and abroad.[7]

The committee called for a realignment effort to encourage the production of proteins and fats in keeping with renewed emphasis on nutritive value and diet reform. It highlighted the success of the US-sponsored school lunch program in Italy, Japan, Tunisia, and Egypt, and advocated for its expansion as one of the most effective applications of American agricultural produce toward improving health, correcting inadequate diets, and securing "political benefits" abroad. Well acquainted with the recent scrutiny of the law, the committee also underscored the legal and pragmatic necessity of addressing American needs first and recommended that

[7] The Food for Peace Program: A Report of the Food for Peace Committee Appointed by Senator Kennedy, October 31, 1960, Submitted by the Committee to the President-Elect January 19, 1961, Box 078a, Folder 9, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

Kennedy visibly pursue assistance programs for economically distressed regions of the United States prior to any announcement of P.L. 480 expansion.[8]

Rural poverty and "depressed area" redevelopment domestically had aroused significant concern in the foregoing decade. The legislative context that immediately preceded the campaign on this issue helps to clarify commitments by both candidates to address the problem. Introduced in the previous chapter, Eisenhower's Rural Development Program had grown from its small pilot version to over two thousand projects in thirty states by 1960, but congressional support for the effort remained contentious. In 1959 the National Planning Association reported that RDP funding—then roughly $150,000 per county—could not hope to significantly impact such a daunting problem. USDA's Agricultural Research Service argued similarly that anything less than a wholesale attack on rural depression, to include expanded Social Security, federal employment programs, and broadening rural education, would surely fail to improve conditions.[9]

Kennedy's platform of rural rehabilitation grew from this debate. One of the original sponsors for the Douglas bill on area redevelopment, he had strongly advocated its passage in a Senate floor speech in May 1958. Historian Sean Savage noted in *Senator from New England* that this speech constituted a break from the senator's earlier perspective regarding the scope of the program and the inclusion of agricultural areas within its purview. It also revealed a departure from his former alignment with Eisenhower on the subject. By the time of the presidential campaign, Kennedy had fully embraced the area redevelopment model as a means to assist poverty-stricken communities, both industrial and rural. Throughout 1960 sympathy

[8] The Food for Peace Program: A Report of the Food for Peace Committee Appointed by Senator Kennedy, October 31, 1960, Submitted by the Committee to the President-Elect January 19, 1961, Box 078a, Folder 9, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.
[9] William B. Dickinson, Jr., "Aid to Depressed Areas," *Editorial Research Reports* 2 (1960): 941-958.

continued to build for residents in Appalachia with reports like Julius Duscha's famous *Washington Post* piece "A Long Trail of Misery Winds the Proud Hills." It lamented that "whole counties are precariously held together by a flour-and-dried-milk paste of surplus foods. The school lunch program provides many children with their only decent meals. Relief has become a way of life for once proud and aggressively independent mountain families . . . the farmers who cannot compete with the mechanized agriculture of the Midwest have themselves become surplus commodities in the mountains."[10]

Indeed, USDA reported over half a million Americans on food relief in West Virginia and Pennsylvania alone that year. As a candidate, Kennedy delivered speeches pledging redevelopment and rehabilitation throughout this region. Following the November vote, the President-Elect demonstrated his commitment to these pledges by placing Senator Paul Douglas in charge of the transition committee tasked with determining methods of "earliest possible assistance" for "depressed areas." Douglas later recalled Kennedy's receptivity to each of the committee's recommendations which he delivered to the President-Elect in Palm Beach on New Year's Day, 1961. Their primary suggestions consisted of including more nutritious foods in the relief distribution program—particularly nutrient rich vegetables—and the expansion of the piloted food-stamp plan. Following those improvements, Douglas suggested that they reintroduce the area redevelopment plan from their earlier bill to encourage job training and industrial expansion in places suffering from ongoing depression.[11]

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[10] Sean J. Savage, *Senator From New England : The Rise of JFK* (Albany: Excelsior Editions State University of New York Press, 2015), 63; Julius Duscha, "A Long Trail of Misery Winds the Proud Hills" *Washington Post,* August 7, 1960.

[11] William B. Dickinson, Jr., "Aid to Depressed Areas," *Editorial Research Reports* 2, (1960): 941-958; John F. Kennedy, Speech in Huntington, West Virginia, April 20, 1960, Box 0908, Folder 20, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Pre-Presidential Papers, Senate Files, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA; Paul H. Douglas, recorded interview by John Newhouse, June 6, 1964, 5-8, Oral History Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Libra

The day after Kennedy's inauguration, he followed this recommendation and immediately began implementing the plans laid out in his "Agricultural Policy for the New Frontier" pamphlet. The new president's initial move appeared in his very first executive order, EO 10914, issued on January 21, 1961. This order instructed the Secretary of Agriculture to increase the distribution of food—both in quantity and quality—to needy American families, particularly those living in distressed communities. Throughout the text of the order, Kennedy offered several justifications for this course of action, ranging from the urgent need to improve national diets to the problems of declining farm prices and the euphemistically titled "agricultural abundance." The order drew on funds permanently appropriated by section 32 of 7 U.S.C. 612, which provided fully thirty percent of annual US Customs receipts to the Secretary of Agriculture and empowered him with discretion to apply such funds in support of US farm prices, exportation, and consumption.[12]

Though this appropriation had been utilized by previous administrations for temporary food stamp programs, USDA officials claimed the order caught them unprepared, inhibiting its full implementation for many months. In the intervening period, the Department scrambled to establish eligibility criteria, design stamps, and plan surplus distribution. Cynical newspapers noted delays in adding new families to the rolls and suggested the operative word in the program might be "diet," but many others praised Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman for his quick response in adding pork, beans, and powdered eggs to the food distribution program within three days of Kennedy's declaration. The earlier food program limited relief supplies to existing federal stockpiles of flour, cornmeal, dried milk, rice, lard, and butter. Both Kennedy and Nixon had supported increased protein distribution throughout the campaign, and Freeman's initial

[12] John F. Kennedy, Executive Order 10914 - Providing for an Expanded Program of Food Distribution to Needy Families, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/237158.

implementation further reveals the national sympathy for protein-starved poverty diets across the country. The emphasis on diet improvement outside the scope of federally owned surplus commodities also reflects a continuation of the interest in national nutrition standards and population fitness dating to the Second World War. [13]

A few years later, Freeman would recall the mechanism through which the new administration built its food stamp program as one of shaky legal standing. In this case, he said, the aim of food assistance drove a reinterpretation of existing agricultural policy. Freeman recalled the strong commitment by himself and others to implement a more permanent food stamp system, and his creative solution of declaring any commodity that failed to achieve ninety percent of parity in pricing as a "surplus." Once labeled with this status, Freeman could then invoke the section 32 distribution authority to convert the produce into direct food assistance.[14]

Given the widespread nature of rural poverty and the rising levels of production from increasingly fewer farms, a successful attack on rural suffering required intervention far beyond the scope of food relief. In March 1961, Kennedy embraced this approach with the announcement of the Rural Areas Development Program, to be administered by the Department of Agriculture. The name and purpose proved difficult to differentiate for some, and though entirely distinct from the "Aid to Depressed Areas" plan, the Rural Areas Development program received many of the same criticisms merely because of the similarity in name. County committee chairs faced an uphill battle as they attempted to explain the differences, while

[13] Walter Trohan, "Where is the Free Food?" *The Spokesman Review* (Spokane, WA) February 26, 1961, 4; Douglas Smith, "Pork, Beans Added to Free Food" *The Pittsburgh Press,* January 24, 1961, 25.
[14] Orville L. Freeman, recorded interview by Charles T. Morrissey, December 15, 1964, 20, Oral History Collection, John F. Kennedy Library.

newspapers simplified their explanations with front page headlines reading "Rural Development Group is Organized: Not 'Depressed' Program."[15]

The sting of insult many counties felt at being classified as Depressed Areas remained fresh, and some lacked enthusiasm for a program which seemed so similar at first glance. Others saw no difference between Kennedy's Rural Areas Development and the previous administration's Rural Development Plan. Some reporters even credited it to the former president outright, calling it "basically an Eisenhower administration act set up to assist in developing human and economic resources."[16] Congressmen, too, even some in Kennedy's own party, could not help but link the renewed effort to Eisenhower's before it. William Natcher of Kentucky lauded the results of the earlier program, declaring its objectives fully met and offering thanks on behalf of his grateful constituents for new jobs, buildings, post offices, and health clinic in his district alone. He then proceeded to celebrate Rural Areas Development as a continuation of those successes.[17]

RAD launched with the same philosophical foundation as so many agricultural policy initiatives before it. The opening message in its USDA handbook invoked the name of Thomas Jefferson and reminded readers of his belief that rural America was "a good place sociologically for a sizable share of our population to live and work," particularly considering the social unrest and the new weapons of war confronting the world. The program knit together development efforts not just within the Department of Agriculture, but also Interior, Commerce, Defense, Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare. It gained additional statutory authority with the

[15] "Rural Development Group is Organized: Not 'Depressed' Program," *The Custer County Chief* (Broken Bow, NE), August 17, 1961, 1.
[16] "Rural Development Group is Organized," 1.
[17] Representative William H. Natcher, speaking on Rural Areas Development Program, on April 13, 1961, 17th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record 107, pt. 5:5902.

passage in May of the Area Redevelopment Act—a modified version of the Douglas-Payne bill. This act established the Area Redevelopment Administration within the Department of Commerce and provided for loans for industrial and public facilities, technical assistance, job training, and subsistence support. In its first year alone, the Area Redevelopment Administration identified 852 redevelopment areas incorporating 686 rural counties.[18]

Rural Areas Development aimed to provide that wholesale attack on rural poverty so strongly advocated by the Agricultural Research Service, the National Planning Association, and the Kennedy administration. Its list of published objectives included, above all, to "preserve and improve the family farm," in addition to expansion of industrial employment opportunities and job training, conversion of surplus cropland into outdoor recreation spaces, and the construction of water systems and hospitals, to name just a few. In its first two years, RAD made significant headway on this agenda. The program supported the creation of 110,000 new jobs in 1963, and secured modern water systems for 56,000 rural people across 150 projects. In the same period, RAD helped 17,500 farmers convert surplus land into revenue-generating recreation facilities, some with enormous returns. One farmer in North Carolina converted eighty-three acres on his farm into a nine-hole golf course. His first year of operation yielded $14,200 of income, $11,000 of which came directly from the golf course. He subsequently secured a major recreation loan from USDA to expand this operation into an eighteen-hole course with clubhouse and other entertainment facilities.[19]

Land-grant colleges also played a key role in the implementation of the Rural Areas Development program. In the publication *Rural Areas Development At Work,* USDA showcased

[18] John A. Baker, *Pegs for Rural Progress* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1962), 9.
[19] US Department of Agriculture, *Rural Areas Development at Work* (Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, 1964) 5-6, 12-13.

examples of land-grant farm management programs that successfully increased farm income by twenty percent. The Seventy-fifth annual convention of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities hosted an entire session on the subject which examined previous challenges and new opportunities in the field of rural progress. V. W. Darter of the University of Tennessee spoke about the tendency among these schools to focus on production improvement—a field in which they excelled—often to the exclusion of other necessary "social and economic adjustments." He particularly noted the importance of broadening adult education and training programs. Darter's speech called for curriculum enhancement across all peer institutions so that they might better support the RAD effort. His plan advocated a combined approach across several college departments including the Graduate School of Social Work, the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, and the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, among others. This, he insisted, would allow a land-grant college "to bring its full resources to bear on the problems of low income, resource adjustment, and the social problem" in order to generate lasting progress, both economic and social.[20]

Fellow speaker N. P. Ralston from Michigan State University echoed these sentiments, tying them together in the underlying purpose of RAD, which he expressed as "develop[ing] all physical, economic, and human resources of an area to their fullest potential for yielding human satisfactions." Both speeches clearly draw on the message of the convention's opening address delivered by Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs Philip H. Coombs. Coombs welcomed participants to the centennial celebration of the land-grant design by elucidating the century of revolution they simultaneously experienced and precipitated. He

[20] V. W. Darter, "Role of Land-Grant Colleges in Rural Areas Development Speech," in Proceedings of the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities 75th Annual Convention, ed. Charles P. McCurdy, Jr., (Washington, DC: American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities, 1961), 120-121.

marveled at the transformation from horse-drawn carts to space flight, crediting land-grant colleges with much of this success. He then went on to portend future revolution in light of growing inequality both domestically and abroad. "Dietary standards, health standards, general living standards and the span of life have shot upward—at least for one small sector of total mankind. Indeed it is the conspicuous gap between this small sector and the rest of mankind that makes further revolutionary changes in the next century mandatory."[21]

Coombs connected this extreme disparity to turmoil and revolt everywhere. He invoked the Jeffersonian model as the revolutionary path toward freedom and equality and held it up against what he called the false promises of Marx and Lenin. The American—and agrarian—ideal, he said, "aims at liberating individuals from *all forms of tyranny and bondage*—hunger, disease and ignorance, feudal lords and governmental masters—and liberating whole nations to pursue the aspirations of their peoples in freedom, dignity, and self-respect."[22] To Coombs, the land-grant institutions served as the vanguard of cherished American values cemented by the improvement of living conditions, increased access to education, enhanced social justice, and broadened opportunity for the people they served. He even called for an expansion of their work in adult education to provide elected leaders with the "broad support of a well-informed citizenry" as they pursued foreign policy aims.[23]

Coombs clearly envisioned the work of the land-grant institutions as a stabilizing and propagandizing force in the fight against agrarian radicalism. His suggested adult education program calls for this outright. His invocation of Jefferson against Marx and Lenin further

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[21] Philip H. Coombs, "Land-Grant Colleges and Universities: The Last Hundred Years—And The Next Speech", in Proceedings of the American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities 75th Annual Convention, ed. Charles P. McCurdy, Jr., (Washington, DC: American Association of Land-Grant Colleges and State Universities, 1961), 10-14.
[22] Coombs, "Land-Grant Colleges and Universities," 11, [emphasis added].
[23] Coombs, "Land-Grant Colleges and Universities," 13.

demonstrates his perception of the yeoman farmer as an instrument of democratization both within the boundaries of the United States, and transplanted abroad.

The Global Approach

Alongside this domestic agenda, Kennedy formalized his commitment to utilizing agriculture as a tool of foreign policy with his second executive order, issued on his fourth day in office. Order 10915 emphasized the humanitarian and foreign policy aims of P.L. 480 and established the position of Food for Peace Administrator within the executive office of the president. The accompanying memo explained that the new director should work with both the Secretary of Agriculture and the Mutual Security Coordinator to bring the program more formally into Cold War service.[24]

George McGovern took on this administrator role and immediately set to work implementing Kennedy's vision for expansion under the existing legislative framework. A series of memoranda exchanged with the President in January and February outline his plan to dispatch a technical mission to Latin American countries in order to spread awareness and begin negotiating food assistance under P.L. 480. McGovern thought it imprudent to go on the technical mission himself but sent Deputy Director James Symington, along with agricultural economists, the agricultural attaché in Buenos Aires, and representatives from USDA, USDS, and the International Cooperation Administration.[25]

While that group visited several countries including Colombia and Uruguay, McGovern led his own smaller team of high-ranking officials to countries where the program required

[24] John F. Kennedy, Memorandum to Federal Agencies on the Duties of the Director of the Food-for-Peace Program, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/236078.
[25] James W. Symington, Memorandum for George McGovern on the Food for Peace Technical Mission, Box 078a, Folder 10, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Office Files, March 15, 1961, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

greater sensitivity and attention. Accompanied by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and future Ambassador Clarence Boonstra, McGovern met first with leaders in Argentina. In 1961 Argentina was a net food exporting nation and officials—though friendly—expressed serious concern that greater US food aid might interfere with their own exports or replace other types of badly needed assistance. McGovern reassured the Argentine representatives that the US did not intend to interfere with their legitimate trade, but he specifically requested tolerance for "decisions [which] lean toward humanitarian rather than commercial aspects" given the urgency of hunger and malnutrition in so many other Latin American countries.[26]

McGovern's team also traveled to Brazil, the country expected to draw the greatest benefit from the expanded program. There, they examined both urban and rural hunger, visiting one of the infamous *favelas* of Rio de Janeiro as well as the impoverished agricultural communities of northeastern Brazil. McGovern doubted whether Title I cash sales could have much impact on the hunger they witnessed in Brazil and instead encouraged an increase of Title II and Title III relief. He expressed grave concern for the northeastern sector as the "most crucial hunger area in Latin America" which he found to be "in urgent need of diversification and reform of its large one-crop sugar estates, rural assistance, irrigation and immediate distribution of food for humans and feed for livestock." In *The Deepest Wounds*, historian Thomas Rogers thoroughly documents the insecure tenure status experienced by Pernambuco agricultural laborers throughout the mid-twentieth century, and his work helps to contextualize the tendency toward intervention among visiting US leaders. As a result of this trip, McGovern strongly

[26] George McGovern, Memorandum for the President on the Food for Peace Mission, Box 078a, Folder 10, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Office Files, February 27, 1961, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

advocated to President Kennedy that Food for Peace assistance be utilized to "aid in land reform and settlement programs" and to incentivize rural Brazilians' participation in them.[27]

The Food for Peace mission's emphasis on land reform partnered well with US sponsored agrarian reform efforts then ongoing throughout Latin America. While Food for Peace representatives traveled throughout the region to spread awareness of the food aid program and P.L. 480, the International Cooperation Administration hosted a seminar to promote reform in Santiago, Chile. Participants attended from seventeen Latin American countries and all received a significant dose of agrarian anti-radicalism and calls to embrace a democratic capitalist tenure model.

Herbert Waters, formerly Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture and now Special Assistant to the Director at ICA, penned an opening philosophy for the gathering. In it, he perfectly articulated the US approach of using agricultural policy to thwart agrarian uprisings and discontent.

> Our purpose is to serve the cause of democracy, and thus overcome the conditions which offer communism and totalitarian forms of society their only chance to advance. Our concern with land tenure problems elsewhere in the world reflects not only our opposition to communism and other totalitarian ways of life, but our positive belief in Democracy as a way of life recognizing inherent human rights, individual dignity, and brotherhood of the human family. It reflects, too, our deep conviction that social justice must be the foundation for sound economic progress. We favor, as a basic objective, efforts to improve agricultural economic and social institutions wherever possible, in order to lessen the causes of agrarian unrest and political instability, and as a key to increasing rural levels of living. . . . land reform efforts today must be devoted to measures which will improve the individual lot of the farmer, both as a producer and as a citizen. . . . The desire of rural people for improvement of the conditions under which they now work the land cannot be ignored, and must be substantially fulfilled if they are to be enlisted in building a strong free world.[28]

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[27] George McGovern, Report on Brazil Mission, Box 078a, Folder 10, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Office Files, February 27, 1961, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.
[28] Herbert J. Waters, *Latin American USOMs Seminar on Agrarian Reform* (Washington, DC: Department of State Communications Resources Division, 1961), i-ii.

Waters asserted that "democratic agrarian reform" as an American ideal predated the revolution itself. Far from a novel policy objective, it "stems from Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, from John Stuart Mill and William Gladstone . . . imbedded in American life . . . the family farm is a foundation of rural American economic, social, and political institutions." He even went so far as to declare "such policies as positive weapons of peace."[29] Waters, like so many US officials in the Cold War era, believed a key component of containment was the limitation of agrarian unrest by the improvement of rural living conditions and increased tenure security. Such changes, they believed, would surely bring about increased political stability and democratization.

A history of US agrarian reform provided the framework for the seminar written by the Farm Economics Research Division of USDA's Agricultural Research Service. The paper emphasized rural reform as a prerequisite to orderly industrial development, and its diagram of the US agrarian structure placed a family farmer at the center of a major web incorporating community services, health and security, capital, technology, and, most importantly, citizenship. It traced the history of US land policy all the way back to the ordinances of the late eighteenth century, constantly emphasizing the democratic underpinnings of affordable acreage and, later, the Homestead Act. It made reference to early debates over sale prices but celebrated the triumph of the particularly American design, the "nation of farmers who personally worked their own land."[30] In addition to domestic policy, the report also included a section on US support for international land reform through bilateral programs and international institutions. It summarized

[29] Waters, *Latin American USOMs Seminar on Agrarian Reform,* iii.
[30] Harry A. Steele, "A Review of United States Policy on Agrarian Reform," *Latin American USOMs Seminar on Agrarian Reform* (Washington, DC: Department of State Communications Resources Division, 1961), 51-55.

these efforts as championing the "agrarian structure" found in the diagram and reiterated the American commitment to transplanting the family farm ownership model around the world.

At the same time, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. sent a confidential memo to President Kennedy advocating more radical action in response to the growing unrest in Latin America. He wrote of a "pressing need… to promote the middle class revolution as speedily as possible" and called for US policy to hasten this revolution with all available methods. Schlesinger encouraged land reform as the most important tool in the effort because, he argued, the existing system of land ownership constituted the greatest obstacle to modernization and development in the entire region. Schlesinger placed the landed oligarchy first on his list of obstacles to middle-class revolution—ahead of Fidel Castro and the communists—and unraveling the "old agrarian order" remained his first priority. Barring an orderly "middle-class revolution," he viewed communist takeover in Latin America as inevitable.[31]

The President continued pursuing international progress as a key component of his containment strategy throughout 1961. Immediately following the 1960 election, Kennedy's staff began planning for a new agency that could consolidate responsibility for foreign aid programs and streamline their administration. Internal records concerning the planning for this agency reveal opposition to a major reorganization of the State Department, but they also insist on the need for a new development framework in the ongoing Cold War. An action plan for the proposed compromise called for prioritizing support of economic, social, political, and cultural growth because "a sense of progress and hope in these countries is imperative."[32] An attached

[31] Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Memorandum to the President, Box 121a, Folder 23, Page 16, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Office Files, 1960, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.
[32] Internal Memorandum, An Action Program for a New Approach in Foreign Assistance, Box 68, Folder 7, Page 1, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Office Files, 1961, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

flowchart and explanatory document suggested granting the new director a status equivalent to that of cabinet secretary and placing P.L. 480 entirely under his jurisdiction, along with other responsibilities ranging from defense support to housing programs. By November 1961, the President formalized this proposal with Executive Order 10973, which established the Agency for International Development (AID). The new organization immediately took ownership of the foreign aid program, and in its first year AID increased spending under Point IV by nearly twenty-five percent.[33]

The Kennedy administration took proactive steps to reform and stabilize rural life in many foreign nations, but it also supported robust intervention in the agriculture of US territories. In early 1961, Kennedy appointed former Texas legislator and cattleman Bill Daniel to serve as governor of the territory of Guam. Daniel wasted no time examining the state of farming and ranching on the island as soon as he managed to plow his way through the Navy's mandatory security clearance process—a three week forced detention for all persons disembarking on the island. He arrived in Guam on May 19, 1961 and formally took office the next day. Three days into his tenure, he toured and catalogued the entirety of the Guamanian government's livestock holdings and agricultural facilities, finding—to his horror—only fourteen cows and zero records of their care or breeding. These paltry assets existed despite the investment of "exorbitant sums" by the territorial department of agriculture and the US Navy for herd development and cattle importation.[34]

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[33] John F. Kennedy, Executive Order 10973—Administration of Foreign Assistance and Related Functions, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/235880; USAID Administrator Report Fiscal Year 1962, , Box 68, Folder 7, Page 1, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Office Files, 1962, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA.

[34] Bill Daniel, Memorandum to the Director of Agriculture, Box 1, Folder 10, Governor Bill Daniel Collection, November 3, 1961, University of Guam Archives, Mangilao, Guam.

Daniel determined to immediately remedy the situation, believing that agricultural improvements, healthcare modernization, and democratic self-government could transform the island into a "showcase of democracy" for Russia, China, North Korea, and other countries along the Pacific Rim. In September he traveled thirty miles north to the island of Rota, where he purchased thirty cows to provide a foundation for the new government herd. He also launched a "back to soil" campaign which utilized the victory garden model to bring two thousand additional plots into vegetable cultivation. Daniel further encouraged participation in the program by planting his own garden at the governor's palace, a garden he worked in knee-high Texas cowboy boots.[35]

By January 1962, the US Navy had temporarily suspended its practice of mandatory security detentions upon arrival, but tension remained significant and Daniel still doubted whether real trust or economic development could take place without the practice's permanent presidential removal. To further secure those objectives while he advocated for Kennedy's revocation of the security clearance order, Daniel assembled a vast "Noah's Ark" of high-value American livestock. These contributions came almost entirely from US government officials, including Vice President Lyndon Johnson, current and former cabinet secretaries, and even some state governors. He called it "Operation Guam Friendship" and it brought sixteen blue ribbon bulls, several Quarter Horse studs, boars, goats, deer, fowl, and perhaps not surprisingly, a pair of armadillos across the Pacific to the port at Agana.[36]

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[35] Eugene Baker, *Mr. Texas,* Box 1, Folder 1, Governor Bill Daniel Collection, 1993, University of Guam Archives, Mangilao, Guam; "Bill Daniel Beefs Up Guam Food Program" *Fort Worth Star Telegram* (Fort Worth, TX), February 11, 1962, 85.

[36] A. B. Won Pat, "Speech at the Arrival Ceremonies of 'Operation Guam Friendship'" February 8, 1962, Box 1, Folder 12, Governor Bill Daniel Collection, University of Guam Archives, Mangilao, Guam.

Many saw this as a key contribution toward ensuring Guam's orderly postwar development and promoting an independent American identity on the island. Speaker of the Guam Legislature Antonio Won Pat welcomed the vessel and declared this another step "in making our island not only a tropical paradise, but a great showcase of Democracy where our children and their children can live and prosper."[37] The New York Times invoked the regional instability throughout the Pacific and called these events "a psychological bridge between the…paternalism of the past and the risks of political and economic adulthood."[38] In this way, agricultural intervention clearly served the purposes of democratization and national identity across this US territory.

Daniel maintained tight control of his agriculture program in the early years, and his order to the Director of Agriculture included a provision that the entire livestock breeding program be done exclusively by him or his designee for a period of seven years. He imposed strict care procedures for the animals and implemented a government branding program alongside new pasture regulations and reporting requirements. Daniel's agriculture program and his successful campaign to lift the Navy's restrictions on entry by US citizens remain the most notable accomplishments of his governorship on the island. They also demonstrate the prioritization of agricultural reform in a US territory inextricably linked with US military interests in the Cold War era.

Crisis and Continuity

When Lyndon Baines Johnson found himself vaulted into the presidency by the shocking assassination of John F. Kennedy in November 1963, he pursued many of the same agricultural

[37] Pat, "Speech at the Arrival Ceremonies of 'Operation Guam Friendship,'" 5.
[38] A. M. Rosenthal, "New Guam? It Blinks At Rays Of Hope" *The New York Times,* March 11, 1962, Box 1, Folder 8, Governor Bill Daniel Collection, University of Guam Archives, Mangilao, Guam.

policy initiatives as his predecessor. Johnson embraced the New Frontier in agriculture, but expanded its scope to pursue the Great Society aims which would come to distinguish his domestic agenda. In his first year, Johnson prioritized building a permanent legislative foundation for the food stamp program reinvigorated at the start of Kennedy's term. A telephone conversation with Larry O'Brien, his 1964 campaign manager, revealed ongoing hostilities in Congress toward a general farm bill but provided hope that a food stamp bill would land more softly and enjoy broader support. As O'Brien explained it, many members of Congress "have just had it on farm bills… and just aren't gonna touch it with a ten foot pole." He cautioned the President that many saw Food Stamps as more imperative—or at least more palatable—and would not be willing to look at a farm bill before food stamps were made permanent. O'Brien and Johnson agreed that this could provide a victory in the agriculture sector before the coming election while securing progress on Johnson's domestic policy agenda.[39]

The Food Stamp Act of 1964 successfully passed and Johnson signed it into law on August 31. The morning of the signing, Johnson spoke with Agriculture Secretary Orville Freeman, who encouraged the President to make "a strong statement about the improved use of food abundance—of food and fiber—in our distribution program and the food stamp program, the school lunch program, and the Food for Peace program," calling it an "effective theme" for the Great Society mission taking shape around the country.[40] Freeman understood that successful communication of Johnson's program within agriculture required acknowledgement of both the farmer struggling against the surplus and of those living in poverty without adequate nutrition.

[39] Telephone conversation # 2368, sound recording, Lyndon B. Johnson and Larry O'Brien, March 6, 1964, 7:20PM, Recordings and Transcripts of Telephone Conversations and Meetings, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library, accessed September 01, 2020, https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/tel-02368.
[40] Telephone conversation # 5273, sound recording Lyndon B. Johnson and Orville Freeman, August 31, 1964, 8:25AM, Recordings and Transcripts of Telephone Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Presidential Library, accessed September 01, 2020, https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/tel-05273.

His suggested language reflected the content of the bill itself. The Food Stamp Act aimed to "strengthen the agricultural economy [and] in order to promote the general welfare… to safeguard the health and well-being of the nation's population and raise levels of nutrition among low-income households." Food stamps provided a mechanism for both by increasing distribution of US agricultural produce to those without the means to purchase it. President Johnson asked Freeman to confer with the speechwriters and make sure his signing statement addressed each of these areas. The resulting remarks demonstrate the secretary's influence and offer strong continuity with the words of the late President Kennedy. This program, he declared, represented Americans' strong humanitarian instincts. It used abundance to "build a better life for every American" and provided "one of our most valuable weapons for the war on poverty." According to the statement, the food stamp program also aligned with the work being done abroad to combat hunger and build international cooperation in the developing world.[41]

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 similarly targeted the "paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty" with its education and job training benefits. The act drew heavily upon the annual report of the Council of Economic Advisers, delivered to the President in January 1964, which found that while the incidence of poverty had declined across many categories in the United States, rural and farm poverty remained a stubborn problem. Though the act provided assistance to both rural and urban Americans, Title III specifically focused on raising incomes and standards of living in rural areas. It accomplished this by making loans from a $35,000,000 appropriation for real estate and for farming operations "not larger than family sized."[42]

[41] Lyndon B. Johnson, Remarks Upon Signing the Food Stamp Act, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/241752.
[42] *Annual Report of the Council of Economic Advisers,* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1964), 72; Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, Pub. L. No. 88-452, 78 Stat. 508, (1964).

Of course, not everyone in Congress supported this provision. Senator John Tower—elected to fill Lyndon Johnson's vacated seat as the first Republican senator from Texas since Reconstruction—called it communism reminiscent of the Farm Security Administration. He quoted at length from the contentious House Agricultural Committee investigation into that organization to express his disapproval of the family farm section. Senator Frank Lausche of Ohio expressed similar opposition, going so far as to label the provision an instrument of Kolkhos, which would spawn Soviet-style collectivized farms across the United States.[43]

Despite this opposition, many supported the provisions made for rural America by this bill, and those provisions remained largely unchanged at the time of its passage. Speaking on behalf of the bill to the National Advisory Committee of Farm Labor, Sargent Shriver argued that it would provide proof "that the spirit and techniques of this American system can satisfy the needs of all our citizens." He reminded his listeners that nearly half of all farm families in the United States lived in poverty and that the Farmers Home Administration was legally prohibited from providing loans to families without repayment prospects. Without adequate resources or access to opportunity, Shriver declared, these families had long since despaired of hope. They were "resigned…weathered….baffled… [and] bitter," surrounded by a sea of mocking plenty. And soon, some policymakers feared, they might cease to tolerate it.[44]

Johnson's Special Message to Congress on Agriculture in February 1965 reiterated this concern. He called it a "matter of simple justice" that American farmers should share in the economic prosperity. Johnson understood clearly the interconnectedness of his farm and rural policies with his plan for the Great Society, saying, "Farm policy is not something separate. It is

[43] Senators John Tower and Frank Lausche, Comments on S.2642, 88th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record 110,* pt. 13: 16757.
[44] Sargent Shriver, *Remarks Before the National Advisory Committee of Farm Labor,* 88th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record 110,* pt. 9: 11900.

part of an over-all effort to serve our national interest, at home and around the world." Johnson went on to detail the struggle of so many rural Americans living through this new agricultural revolution and declared that the bleak reality mandated a new policy for rural America "with parity of opportunity as its goal." Only a dedicated program of rural and agricultural policies could help keep democracy prosperous and strong, he argued.[45]

In 1966 the administration looked to target rural poverty more specifically and asked Freeman and the USDA to author a plan with this goal in mind. Johnson explained to the Secretary his conviction that rural poverty now directly fed urban unrest and required mitigating efforts in order to slow the spread of urban violence. Robert G. Lewis, Administrator for the Rural Community Development Service, helped establish Johnson's Task Force on Agriculture and Rural Life and likewise revealed for himself, and for many of his colleagues just how connected the rural development mission had become with the increase in urban instability. This represented an extension of previous intervention motives. Whereas before policymakers feared rural unrest for breeding agrarian radicalism in the countryside, now they believed the substandard quality of life in rural American had spilled over, fomenting riots in urban centers as well.

Lewis answered the President's request and submitted his first proposal nine days after the Watts Riots concluded in Los Angeles. He spoke at length about the impact of the riots on the administration's planning for rural development. He recalled reading newspaper interviews with rioters and noted many of them had moved to California from Mississippi, Arkansas, or East Texas, all in the past twenty years. Lewis understood their participation in the riots as a

[45] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress on Agriculture," *in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Book 1* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 140-141.

manifestation of their suffering, first in impoverished rural communities, then in the cities for which they had no context or experience to enable their successful integration. He connected this dissonance to his personal transition, having been raised on a Montana homestead and then attempting to raise children in Washington, DC without the outdoor recreation or culture so foundational in his own life. Lewis argued repeatedly that the alternative to rural development was "the one-way bus ticket to Chicago."[46]

Secretary Freeman expressed a similar apprehension of rural out-migration. He grimly detailed the impact of agriculture's technological revolution on farm families and laborers, noting, "this revolution, in the span of six years, reduced the need for harvest farm labor in the Mississippi Delta from 750,000 man days to 95,000… As a consequence, legions of rural young people . . . flooded into the cities." This, he said, "created stress situations that led to riots, human withdrawal and is altering man's reactions and attitudes toward society and his fellow man."[47] Freeman denied promoting a back-to-the-land movement for its own sake, but insisted that if rural life could not be made more attractive, then urban violence could only increase. Democratization and social cohesion, he argued, would have to start in the country.

Johnson agreed, and hoped to target rural poverty with his proposed Community Development District Act. This bill would have granted the Secretary of Agriculture authority to delineate or approve boundary lines which tied rural communities to nearby cities for the purpose of centralized planning of public services. The governments from each city or town within the district would then appoint a board to govern the planning and development of that district. The bill proposed to cover program costs with federal grants, including funding for up to seventy-five

[46] Oral history transcript, Robert G. Lewis, interview 2 (II), May 9, 1986, by Michael L. Gillette, Lyndon Johnson Library Oral Histories, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.
[47] Orville Freeman, Statement in "Congress Considers Plans to Aid Rural Development," Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 1967, 23rd ed. 13, Washington, DC, 1968, 1051.

percent of the district's staff salaries. The chief aim of the project was to ensure "more equitable participation by rural residents in coordinated planning activities," along with increasing the influence of small government units and providing "equality of opportunity" to rural Americans.[48] The bill enjoyed the support of the Farmers Union, the National Grange, and the National Association of Counties, while the American Farm Bureau Federation remained reticent on the subject. Unfortunately for Johnson, the bill faced a massive opposition campaign from the Chamber of Commerce of the United States. After passing in the Senate, it died in the House when Democratic leaders—fearing defeat—refused to bring it to the floor.[49]

In response to this failure, Johnson issued Executive Order 11306, formally establishing both the Committee and the National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty. To the Committee, he appointed the Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior, Commerce, Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare, and Housing and Urban Development, along with the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity and the Administrator of the Small Business Administration. The makeup of the Committee reflected a diversity of mission and of opinion. Robert Lewis noted significant opposition among the Office of Economic Opportunity staff toward any additional placement of resources in rural communities. He quoted them as saying rural areas are "no damn good" in inter-agency meetings and suggested that their office viewed rural intervention as "agrarian fundamentalism."[50]

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[48] Senate, Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, *Community Development District Act of 1966: Hearings Before the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry,* 89th Cong., 2nd sess., 1966, 1-3.
[49] "Rural Planning Districts," *Congressional Quarterly Almanac, 1966,* 22nd ed. (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1967), 127-29.
[50] Lyndon B. Johnson, Executive Order 11306—Establishing the President's Committee on Rural Poverty and the National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, The American Presidency Project, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/239416; Oral history transcript, Robert G. Lewis, Interview II, 13, May 9, 1986, by Michael L. Gillette, LBJ Library Oral Histories, Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library.

The Committee appointed the members of the Commission which was then responsible for investigating all aspects of rural life. Its research mandate included everything from employment and land use, to migration, children's health, and the availability of community facilities. Johnson's Commission on Rural Poverty received a charge almost identical to that given Roosevelt's Country Life Commission nearly sixty years earlier. Each commission was instructed to examine the state of rural life in America. Each did so in order to better understand the outflow of people from countryside to city. Each made recommendations for improvements to incentivize rural living. Each concerned itself with the stirrings of discontent and radicalism which policymakers connected to disparate living conditions in America's rural communities. But Johnson's commission conducted its research in a context vastly different from that of Roosevelt's. In the 1900 census, fully sixty percent of Americans lived in rural settings; by 1970, that number had fallen to twenty-six percent.[51]

The 160-page report from Johnson's Commission on Rural Poverty detailed this transition and painted a bleak picture of rural life at the end of the 1960s. Titled *The People Left Behind*, it chronicled an agricultural revolution that increased farm output by forty-five percent in the previous fifteen years and cut farm employment by the same amount. It predicted a further forty-five percent drop in farm jobs in the fifteen years ahead. According to the commission, these realities necessitated a new kind of rural policy approach. In the past, rural policy took shape through the lens of agriculture and, as the commission explained, "the welfare of farm families was equated with the well-being of rural communities and of all rural people."[52] But this

[51] US Census Bureau, "Urban and Rural Populations in the US," accessed August 28, 2020, https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/urban-and-rural-populations-in-the-united-states.
[52] National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, *The People Left Behind, a Report by the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 1, 1967), ix.

was no longer the case. Rural policy that centered on agriculture no longer fit the needs of the community. A seismic shift had occurred.

The report suggested a series of programs in twelve focus areas. Health and medical data revealed massive disparity between rural and urban healthcare options, the former deficient in both quantity and quality. Even with the sharp decline in rural population, the number of medical professionals in rural communities did not approach proportional representation. In 1967, only eight percent of pediatricians and less than four percent of psychiatrists practiced in rural areas. Based on this and hospital data, the commission recommended loan forgiveness for rural practitioners, a federal Rural Health Corps, a national children's dentistry program, and comprehensive medical care for rural Americans.[53]

They further advocated for job training, family planning, education, and rural housing. Agriculture appeared last on the list. In the farm section, the commission acknowledged that large-scale commercial agriculture had become the new norm. Instead of fighting to keep each small farmer on the land, they recommended a definitive intellectual separation between commercial farm policy and rural intervention programs. To combat rural poverty and agricultural inefficiency, they proposed a purchase program which would enable low-income farmers to sell their acreage to the federal government so that they might move into non-farm employment or retire. They stated plainly that ongoing farm policy would continue to have the effect of consolidating large holdings and injuring small operators, but they contrasted this American model with the comprehensive efforts of places like Sweden and Holland to pursue the same end by moving citizens into alternate occupations. Here, the commission argued, US policymakers must respect that some low-income operators wanted to farm, despite their relative

[53] National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, *The People Left Behind*, 69-72.

lack of success. Others, they explained, found themselves forced into such position due to a lack of opportunity. The commission report proposed a voluntary assistance program that worked within this reality by improving conditions for those who wished to remain, and offering training and mobility assistance for those who did not. Such an approach, the commissioners hoped, might help rectify existing policy shortcomings.[54]

"Transplanting the Great Society"

While Johnson's Great Society took shape as a framework for domestic policy, he—with support from Vice President Hubert Humphrey—also strove to extend these benefits to people suffering around the globe. In July 1964, the US Department of Agriculture joined with the Agency for International Development and the Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges to cosponsor a conference in Washington, DC on International Rural Development. At this meeting, leaders from these organizations and numerous congresspersons met to strengthen the model of US support for rural communities abroad.

David E. Bell, administrator of AID, opened the conference with a welcome address in which he laid out the lessons learned from American rural policy domestically. He then urged participants to realize the necessity of applying these lessons abroad in light of the "extraordinary significance of the problem of rural development in the world."[55] Bell celebrated the accomplishments of a century of cooperation between the Land-grant institutions and USDA, noting that in addition to productive agriculture, they bore significant responsibility for ensuring the continuation of America's free institutions and social and political stability. Bell perfectly

[54] National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty, *The People Left Behind*, 145.
[55] David E. Bell, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," *Department of State Bulletin,* 51, no. 1316 (1964): 376-383.

understood these aims of US rural and agricultural policy throughout the nation's history, and he inquired explicitly how the same approach might be used to transplant these systems overseas.

> We have come together here today to consider what we can do to help achieve similar results in the less developed countries of the world. All of us in the United States would like to see in the developing countries a growth in agricultural productivity and in rural living standards, coupled with a strengthening of local public and private institutions, just as we have seen these things happen in the United States over the last century. If we can help bring this about, it will benefit the United States as well as the people of the developing countries. Rural development in Asia and Africa and Latin America will benefit us by strengthening the prospects for peace and freedom around the world; it will contribute to a stronger and healthier world economy in which our own exports and our own foreign investments can flourish; and it is certainly essential to our own self-respect to use a share of the resources of the strongest nation in the world to help our fellow human beings.[56]

Bell saw in US agriculture policy evidence of its impact on democratization and identity formulation, but, he argued, such things were not secured through advances in agriculture alone. Instead, they grew from the holistic policy approach that considered improvements in markets, transportation, education, healthcare, and local institutions. He cited examples from US domestic policy alongside earlier international efforts to illustrate his argument. In Taiwan, Bell explained, land reform and farm technology proved important components of the US-sponsored rural development program, but the success of the Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction also drew heavily on the construction of roads, schools, and healthcare services. According to Bell, these examples proved "the necessity for considering rural development as a problem of rural societies, not just a problem in agricultural technology." When these efforts combined, he argued, they worked to promote desired attitudes and value systems "particularly important in the newer nations, where it is frequently necessary to develop a sense of national identity that gives the people respect for themselves and confidence in their ability to meet the future

[56] Bell, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," 377.

successfully." David E. Bell, Administrator of USAID, was using American rural and agricultural policy for the express purpose of Cold War era nation-building.[57]

Though by 1964 the land-grant schools had long been engaged in international cooperative efforts—as this study has thoroughly demonstrated—the Conference on International Rural Development called for a significant expansion of such programs. Bell pointed to the work of North Carolina State and Iowa State in Peru as one model to follow. Both institutions sent teams of significant size across that country to target specific needs in rural development. North Carolina State focused on agricultural research and broad extension outreach, while Iowa State worked with Peru's National Planning Commission to develop and implement a nationwide rural development plan. AID helped coordinate and support these partnerships. Highlighting his agency's plan for more projects of this type, Bell called on both USDA and the land-grant institutions to take a larger role "in country planning processes," again reiterating AID's intent to utilize rural and agricultural intervention as a nation-building mechanism.[58]

Secretary Freeman spoke next at the conference, taking special care to welcome the legislators and the land-grant representatives that he called "the sources of ideas and ideals by which we seek to solve the problems of human relationships."[59] Freeman focused his message on establishing America's stake in rural development overseas. He began by acknowledging his own deep concern for rural life domestically and inquired rhetorically as to why a US government department tasked with agriculture should concern itself with international affairs. The Secretary answered his own question with three emphatic responses: money, democracy,

[57] Bell, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," 378.
[58] Bell, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," 381.
[59] Orville Freeman, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," *Department of State Bulletin,* 51, no. 1316 (1964): 383-388.

and morality. Freeman built a firm case for the necessity of economic development abroad in the creation of stable export markets for US produce. He illustrated the existing ratio of one export dollar for every one hundred dollars of personal income overseas and admonished his listeners that only by increasing foreign development could the United States hope to convert those people into regular customers.

Further, Freeman argued, "if the developing nations can be helped to achieve satisfactory growth rates under free institutions, the security of the free world will be immeasurably strengthened."[60] He lauded the Jeffersonian model of the yeoman farmer as foundationally important in US development and declared this model ideal for instilling high levels of personal citizenship and improving national security. He then encouraged its exportation as a way to prevent radicalization and stave off "global explosion."[61] Finally, Freeman explained, to strive for anything less than abundance for all the world's people would be unworthy of the Great Society which morally demands it.

The conference sessions yielded important proposals for use by the participating organizations, particularly in the arena of "country planning" mentioned above. Specialists noted that many governments in developing countries remained indifferent to the rural sector, preferring instead to target resources toward industrialization and urban growth which yielded more immediately visible results. Often, the report emphasized, such an approach further inhibited rural development without any awareness of the fallout. One of the first steps they

[60] Freeman, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," 386.
[61] Freeman, "Address to the Conference on International Rural Development," 387.

recommended was a "deliberate and aggressive US policy of applying all the leverages at its command to . . . 'make agriculture important'" to local leadership.[62]

The program planning and execution panel also formally recommended the "fullest feasible participation by the university community and USDA" in each phase of the effort. Speakers acknowledged this would require additional funding and support for the schools which would need to commit high level scholars and staff to the program, but the report concluded, since foreign universities generally had little involvement in the development of policy, the US university presence would be even more critical. One key conference result was the adoption of contract standards between AID and participating universities which called for clear negotiation of agreed upon duties and guaranteed funding for an established period of years.[63]

Johnson had advocated this kind of targeted intervention in his *Message to Congress on Foreign Aid.* In his remarks, he highlighted the importance of development programs for the safety of democracy and the stability of the free world, claiming they would "aid in frustrating the ambitions of Communist imperialism… and support the moral commitment of free men everywhere to work for a just and peaceful world." He encouraged additional appropriations for foreign aid as insurance against future war or massive defense spending, but also emphasized what he saw as the moral imperative to build a world "where the weak can walk without fear and in which even the smallest nation can work out its own destiny without the danger of violence and aggression."[64]

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[62] United States Department of Agriculture, Agency for International Development, Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, *Proceedings of the Conference on International Rural Development,* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1964), 87.
[63] USDA, *Proceedings of the Conference on International Rural Development,* 95.
[64] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Foreign Aid: Message of the President to Congress" *The Department of State Bulletin* 50, no. 1293 (1964): 522.

Johnson also utilized P.L. 480 in pursuit of this aim. Echoing the sentiments of so many American leaders throughout the Cold War, Johnson called Food for Peace a powerful weapon, arming hungry men and women against the communist contagion. He also celebrated the second-order effect of the program that not only fed hungry children through international school lunch aid and engendered good will among their parents toward the United States, but also established dietary habits that were built on American commodities such as wheat and corn. Most important to Johnson, however, was the role food aid played in political stability and economic and social development.[65] Food for Peace Administrator Richard Reuter highlighted these goals as he delivered speeches across the country building support for his organization's mission. He told the Women's National Democratic Club that just as Johnson saw self-sufficiency as the aim of his New Deal job in Texas, so too did the Food for Peace office strive to place recipient nations on a path to agricultural independence.

Reuter called special attention to the new food-for-wages program established in twenty-two countries, which employed 700,000 people in 1964. It enabled governments to hire laborers for public works projects and pay them a partial salary, approximately thirty percent of which was supplemented with P.L. 480 food products. Even more far-reaching, the school lunch program had swelled to include forty million children in over 100 countries around the globe. Paraphrasing the famous queen, Reuter declared "we have, thank heaven, moved on to a more

[65] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Special Message to the Congress on Agriculture," *in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Book 1,* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966) 147; Lyndon B. Johnson, "Statement by the President on the Food for Peace Program," *in Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, Book 1,* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1966), 139.

enlightened age when one in authority no longer dares to survey a mass of hungry people and suggest, 'let them eat cake.'"[66]

By 1965 many in Congress expressed interest in expanding the P.L. 480 program once again. Senator Walter Mondale delivered a speech calling for "crash programs of rural development… in countries threatened by revolution or subversion because of unrest in areas away from large cities."[67] The Democratic supermajority from the 1964 election increased congressional support for the expansion of Food for Peace, coinciding with the passage of many other pieces of Great Society legislation in the 89th Congress. This renewed interest culminated in the Food for Peace Act of 1966. The new Food for Peace legislation removed the surplus disposal language of the original act and instead emphasized combatting hunger and malnutrition. It also encouraged agricultural self-help among developing nations. It required the president to consider each recipient's "degree of self-reliance" and laid out nine self-help criteria the recipient should be pursuing prior to participation under Title I. It also expressly defined "friendly countries" as those not dominated or controlled by a communist government or by the "world communist movement." Above all, it prioritized the humanitarian and foreign policy objectives of the program which aligned with Johnson's domestic agenda.[68]

Kristen Ahlberg's book, *Transplanting the Great Society,* found these same aims when she detailed Johnson's administration of the Food for Peace program. She contended, "What Johnson could accomplish legislatively within the United States, he could accomplish globally with Great Society–style initiatives interwoven into the foreign assistance tapestry. More

[66] Richard Reuter, "The Cry of Hunger and US Surpluses" speech given to the Woman's National Democratic Club, February 27, 1964, Box 2, Folder 8, Papers of Richard W. Reuter, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, MA
[67] Walter Mondale, *Food For Peace Newsletter*, no. 26, September 1965, 4.
[68] Food for Peace Act of 1966, Pub. L. No. 89-808, 80 Stat. 1526, (1966).

important, by extending conditional aid to those nations willing to "play" by American rules, Johnson hoped not only to transform these societies along American lines, thus drawing them away from Soviet or Chinese-style communism, but also to forge allegiances in support of U.S. policy."[69]

Johnson's Great Society, implemented both domestically and abroad, provides a fitting bookend to this study. The program's intervention in rural life grew from a half-century of decisionmakers applying US agricultural policy to exactly this end: the elevation of rural living standards as a social and democratic imperative. Johnson witnessed earlier iterations through his own involvement as the Texas State Director for Roosevelt's National Youth Administration, his advocacy for expanded rural electrification, and his ongoing support for Food For Peace. The Great Society's attack on rural poverty, substandard education, and inadequate healthcare in the countryside demonstrate prioritization of the Jeffersonian ideal even as the economic viability of that model declined in the United States. In so doing, it marked the culmination of a policy effort reaching back to Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission, and beyond.

[69] Kristin L. Ahlberg, *Transplanting the Great Society : Lyndon Johnson and Food for Peace* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 5.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

If a whole is sometimes greater than the sum of its parts, it is always greater than *one* of those parts, just as agricultural policy in the United States is greater than the sum of the farm bills. The *sum* of US agricultural policies from the Great War to the Great Society demonstrates a massive influence over the lives and experiences of rural Americans. During this period, policymakers moved purposefully and emphatically beyond commodity concerns and aimed to remake rural life and farmer identity in the United States. They held as their model Thomas Jefferson's agrarian ideal, a nation of freeholders deeply invested in the preservation of the republic and their own contributions to its success. They demonstrated clear intent to wield this farm identity as a tool of democratization, growth, and national cohesion not only within the countryside but also in the nation at large and around the globe. That they built this policy in pieces in no way undermines its existence. Instead, the fragmentary nature of American rural and agricultural policy perfectly encapsulates the design of American government. When historians and political scientists claim otherwise, they do so largely because an overly narrow focus limits their field of view.

James C. Scott's assertion that "[Americans have seldom] . . . asked themselves what kinds of rural communities they wish to promote, what the rural landscape should look like, what land uses should be encouraged, and what rural services should be publicly provided" appeared in the Foreword to Bill Winders's study of the history of agricultural price supports and production controls in the United States.[1] The scope of that work illuminates Scott's claim. To study the farm bills as the whole of US farm policy might seem cleaner, or more expedient, but the picture yielded by such studies is necessarily incomplete. The farm bills did not electrify the

[1] James C. Scott, Foreword to Bill Winders, *The Politics of Food Supply*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), xi.

countryside; they did not establish farmer field schools in political philosophy; they did not seek to convert tenants into freeholders, or provide public secondary education to rural families, or build medical clinics in regions with limited access to care; they did not tell the soldier returning from war to get himself a farm in order that he might experience American life more richly, but *agricultural policy* did each of these.

The American founders understood agricultural prosperity as a demonstration of the triumph of their experiment. They built upon a philosophy of republican government that required egalitarian freeholding for its success. They solemnized the connection between farming and civic virtue, which transformed into an insatiable hunger for western lands. The availability of land—once wrested from its occupants—delayed agriculture's social crisis, and reduced the visibility of that crisis for a time, but could not entirely prevent it. When agrarian radicalism arose with renewed vigor at the close of the nineteenth century, and rural outmigration climbed, reformers searched for solutions that could address both of these problems. They hoped that people would return to the land to reduce crowding in cities but also because they believed—as Jefferson had—that country life was an ideal choice for the cultivation of democratic values. Theodore Roosevelt and his fellow progressives attempted to ascertain exactly what had gone wrong across the American countryside with the establishment of the Country Life Commission in 1908. That group stated its purpose clearly, "not to help the farmer raise better crops, but to call his attention to the opportunities for better business and better living on the farm."[2] Its investigation revealed a rural quality of life far below the living standards of other US communities, and the commission advocated awareness of and support for the farmer's plight, but the time had not yet arrived for full-scale intervention. The report went so far as to claim "it

[2] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 60th Cong., 2d sess., 1909, S. Doc. 705, 4.

is not within the sphere of any government to reorganize the farmers' business or reconstruct the social life of farming communities," and yet that time, too, would come.[3]

By the start of the Wilson administration, many of the Country Life ideas had permeated both the legislative and executive branches. Commission member Walter Page directly advised the president on his agricultural program and recommended the administration's Secretary of Agriculture nominee, David F. Houston. Unified Democratic control of Congress and the White House allowed for an expanded policy agenda, which would oversee the enactment of several agricultural programs characterized by Progressive ideological foundations. Among these, the Smith-Lever Act expanded cooperative extension and established a nationwide system that targeted farming practices and home life alike. It built on the framework of the land grant institutions to connect farm families with education, social opportunities, and friendly support to help craft stronger, more stable farm communities. The Federal Farm Loan Act pursued land reform that paralleled similar efforts sweeping across Europe. It identified farm tenancy as a hindrance to development and full participation in the experience of citizenship, and worked to correct this trend by making land purchase more accessible through the support of the US treasury. The Smith-Hughes Act for vocational education brought an agriculture curriculum into America's secondary schools and helped train teenage boys to serve as farm labor once the first world war sharply increased production needs.

At the outset of global war, Wilson proclaimed a "spiritual distinction" enjoyed by the United States through her citizens' connection to the land. He pressed for intervention in farming practices and conservation methods as a means to ensure the preservation of soil fertility, which provided the foundation of her "inexhaustible wealth." His US Food Administration, under the

[3] *Report of the Country Life Commission*, 60th Cong., 2d sess., 1909, S. Doc. 705, 4.

leadership of Herbert Hoover, championed democratic values through agricultural policy measures by their voluntary design and frequent evocation of contrasts with totalitarian regimes.

The US Food Administration, in order to ensure the success of its voluntary approach, relied upon propaganda and social pressure to build national cohesion around its plan for agricultural production and consumption. Window placards and pledge cards established clear criteria by which women could judge one another's patriotism, and home demonstration agents hosted sessions that taught those women to utilize mandatory grain substitutes without deviating from traditional Anglo-American foodways. Special school programs brought young men and women into agricultural service with militaristic language that taught them to see their contributions as equaling those made on the actual battlefield. All the while, government leaders reiterated the message that robust production demonstrated American superiority to a struggling world.

In order to sustain and improve this production, they argued, American farmers had no choice but to embrace intervention in the form of production targets, substitute sales, scientific farming methods, and even government-authored dinner menus. That they were willing to do so, and to report on neighbors who failed to comply, demonstrates the role of the first world war as a catalyst for long-term intervention through the decades that followed.

The aftermath of war brought prosperity for many, but while the cities roared through the 1920s, agriculture sank into deep depression. The loss of international markets and the massive increase of sub-marginal lands under cultivation spelled disaster for US growers. Even as postwar leaders called for "Normalcy," they acknowledged the need for a "definite agriculture policy." The Harding administration prioritized soil fertility as a national interest and pursued land reform to reduce the spread of farm tenancy across the country. Harding also demonstrated

some continuity with the Country Life Commission, selecting as his Secretary of Agriculture Henry C. Wallace, the son of "Uncle" Henry Wallace who had served in that group. Like his predecessors, Harding saw agriculture as a key part of the national destiny, and—despite a generally *laissez faire* approach in other arenas—pursued agricultural intervention that he believed would help to elevate American farmers and benefit the nation as a whole.

Harding's National Conference on Agriculture in 1922 resulted in a number of identified policy goals, the majority of which reflected the progressive aims found in the Country Life Commission report. These targeted rural health and the development of public hospitals in places more accessible to rural America, the expansion of education and literacy programs in the countryside, and the anti-tenancy land reform that Harding had advocated throughout his presidential campaign. The Capper-Volstead Act and subsequent legislative initiatives demonstrate national commitment to these policies, despite suspicion of government intervention in other arenas at the time. Harding is often noted by historians for his hands-off approach. His invocation of "normalcy" set up his entire administration as a contrast to the upheaval of World War I and its accompanying managed economy. Yet, Harding's agriculture program tells a different story.

When he ascended to the presidency following Harding's death in 1923, Calvin Coolidge showcased a similar preference for small government, *laissez faire* policies. Despite significant Congressional support for the legislation, and the advocacy of his own agriculture secretary, Coolidge twice vetoed the McNary-Haugen bill designed to implement parity pricing for farm produce. His opposition to McNary-Haugen notwithstanding, Coolidge supported his own kind of intervention in this sector with his appointment of William Jardine as agriculture secretary upon the death of Henry C. Wallace.

Jardine—an opponent of McNary-Haugen and friend of Commerce Secretary Herbert Hoover—had long prioritized farmer education programs, but also expressed a belief that legislation played a key role in perfecting the farmer's relationship to the land both in the near term, and with an eye for long-range consequences. Under his leadership, USDA's Bureau of Agricultural Economics further embraced this approach. Their support of M.L. Wilson's Fairway Plan for reducing tenancy and encouraging consolidated farm ownership demonstrated a modified public-private take on agricultural policy initiatives, but pursued progressive intervention in farm life nonetheless.

After Coolidge, the Hoover administration took a broader approach to the farm problem—utilizing transportation, tariffs, and international trade policy in an attempt to bring about stability and prosperity in the farm sector. Hoover's effort to propel farmers toward modern industrial ideals further demonstrates a progressive inclination in his agricultural policy. His "great instrumentality…to assist our farmers"—the new Federal Farm Board—reflected this. For many agricultural economists and congressmen, however, this effort did not go far enough in addressing the ongoing crisis. They advocated even greater intervention to mend and protect "the entire fabric of our rural civilization." Their ideas for Domestic Allotment and their promotion of scientific efficiency in furtherance of democratic values established the foundation for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration that followed in 1933.[4]

When Franklin Roosevelt entered the race for the White House, he emphasized the failure of the preceding administrations' plans to ameliorate the farm problem. Roosevelt countered with the words "national planning," and once he assumed office he undertook several initiatives aimed at keeping farmers in place and elevating their incomes and standards of living. Though

[4] Congressional Record, 71st Cong., 1st Sess., 1929, 71, pt. 1: 42.

some of these—like the AAA—pursued chiefly commodity-based improvements, policymakers simultaneously wielded them against the stirrings of agrarian radicalism and toward the consolidation of an American national identity in the Progressive vein. The New Deal's rural rehabilitation and Subsistence Homesteads programs not only targeted struggling rural families, but urban ones as well. That policymakers attempted to convert unemployed industrial workers into novice, yeoman farmers demonstrates their deep commitment to the Jeffersonian ideal despite the ongoing, nationwide depression. Farm life, these leaders believed, would fix its participants, and bring them more in line with American societal goals. But farm life—such as it was in the mid-1930s—required some fixing, too.

The Rural Electrification Administration worked tirelessly to correct deficiencies on farms they called "behind the times." REA agents put on whole circuses of electrical conveniences and distributed flyers purporting to show the number of man-hours each farmer could save by participating in the program. Rural electrification also explicitly sought to improve the attractiveness of farm life in order to keep rural youth from fleeing to the cities. By elevating the quality of life in the countryside, REA hoped to stem the tidal wave of rural outmigration that had inundated America's urban centers for decades.

When passive identity creation proved inadequate, the USDA began directly indoctrinating its own employees and farmer clients alike with its establishment of Democratic Philosophy Schools. These multi-day gatherings instructed attendees in the writings of Jefferson and Kant, and asked them to consider questions of agricultural democracy, social control, and pathways to a "more abundant rural life." They emphasized cohesion, modernization, and the sort of American agrarian exceptionalism that underlay so many of these policies. First offered for departmental field agents, the program swelled to incorporate schools for librarians,

townsfolk, and leaders in higher education in order to ensure thorough dissemination. Clearly the Department of Agriculture believed that these lessons had value beyond the field itself. Training townsfolk and urban librarians in the democratic philosophy of American farming supported the establishment of the agrarian national identity they so doggedly pursued.

The creation of the Farm Security Administration in 1937 brought many of these earlier interventions under a single umbrella for America's poorest farmers. This "poor man's Department of Agriculture" showcased impassioned commitment among its staff to Jefferson's model and positioned itself as the cure for poverty's radicalizing effects.[5] The FSA targeted land reform through tenant purchase assistance, rural healthcare, and scientific farm management as key mechanisms through which it might remake the countryside into something more securely democratic. It pursued an American farm identity tightly knit together through shared prosperity and advancement. As a whole, these New Deal programs enacted and expanded the vision of the Country Life Progressives—including the grandfather of then Vice President Henry Wallace—in a wholesale attack on a rural life experience they considered beneath the American standard.

Where the New Deal implemented and strengthened these ideas, the Second World War solidified this vision into a permanent fixture in US agricultural policy both domestically and abroad. The USDA's intervention in Latin America demonstrated the perceived wartime imperative to inculcate democratic values among US neighbors and to encourage the cultivation of crops no longer available for import due to war in the Pacific. Agriculture initiatives at home further revealed the conviction among policymakers that Americans must all experience a universally high standard of living as a foil against totalitarianism. They expressed beliefs that a high quality of life not only demonstrated the superiority of the American system, but

[5] Gilbert, *Planning Democracy,* 88.

incentivized loyal military service as well. To promote this living standard, they turned to rural reform with even greater interest.

In the early years of World War II, the Farm Security Administration continued to fight for rehabilitation and self-sufficiency among the poorest farmers in the country, but war mobilization added further projects to their agenda. As new military bases and defense sites displaced significant numbers of American farmers, the FSA worked to find them new land and to keep them employed in agriculture, despite lucrative new defense jobs in their areas. FSA officials reiterated their commitment to the democratizing effect of farm life, and the values it instilled, to persuade participants to forego these short-term payouts. The USDA also rallied American farmers with calls to agricultural military service and presented programs like Lend-Lease as both benevolent and demonstrative of democratic superiority, agricultural and otherwise.

If the farm sector was to produce enough to win this war, however, the USDA recognized that farm families would require a dramatic infusion of energy and better health to operate at their highest capacity. For this reason, diet intervention became a paramount concern. Poor rural health not only harmed individuals, but hampered the entire war effort and, by extension, imperiled the future of democracy. To correct the problem the USDA worked to instill a national culture of gardening through the national garden conference, sponsored 4-H activities, and propaganda. These gardens served the dual purposes of diversifying nutritional intake and connecting the gardener to the greater American identity, promoting morale and social cohesion in a time of crisis.

When Roosevelt initiated the internment of persons of Japanese descent with his infamous Executive Order 9066, the USDA stepped in again to attempt to use agricultural

policies and programs to promote democratization and national identity even through this terribly undemocratic ordeal. FSA adapted their migrant labor camp model into full-scale internment camps while continuing to publicly avow their prioritization of the virtues of citizenship. USDA BAE analysts examined the impact of these camps on racial attitudes in the local community and implemented strategies to combat negative stereotypes even as they continued to support the internment plan. Counterintuitive though it may seem to the modern reader, many of these officials believed—as indicated through private, internal memos—that this farm labor program could successfully propagandize internees and nearby residents alike, and unite them more fully with the American agenda.

With internees locked away at home, the United States began pursuing mechanisms by which to promote the Jeffersonian model abroad. The new UN Food and Agriculture Organization sought to transplant agrarian ideals overseas and argued that the future success of democracy required "Freedom from want" across the globe. The sharing of scientific and agricultural expertise, US leaders claimed, could reduce radicalism and promote stability in places otherwise susceptible to totalitarian rule. They drew upon three decades of domestic agricultural policy to present the argument that rural radicalism not only could be contained, but its energy could be harnessed and redirected toward a more perfect realization of the Jeffersonian model. The FAO became a vehicle through which these leaders pursued such long-term policy initiatives abroad.

When Americans finally began returning home in large numbers, the War Department looked for the best way to reintegrate them into society. The GI Bill held up the same agrarian ideal as a prime method of reentry and path to future prosperity. USDA manuals encouraged farm life for soldiers, sailors, and marines who had never before worked the land. They wrote of

idyllic families, doting wives, and the peace and freedom to be found in the open air of the countryside. This swords-to-plowshares campaign demonstrates the depth of the commitment to agriculture's democratizing influence and its role in binding together national identity within the United States. It further illuminates the reflections of BAE sociologist Olaf Larson when he wrote, "To preserve, reinforce, and perpetuate the family-type farm and to foster farming as a way of life rather than as purely a commercial enterprise have been prominent national goals."[6] This idea that farming had national value beyond its commercial application is the very foundation of decades of agricultural policy. It also explains the continuation of a separate rural policy beyond the Johnson years, when massively commercialized and industrialized agriculture rendered many yeoman farmers uncompetitive and obsolete.

The Cold War Imperative

The aftermath of World War II brought with it the fear of a communist contagion and pressed US agriculture policy into service on a global scale. Both presidents Truman and Eisenhower utilized farm policy to promote a progressive Jeffersonian agrarianism they wielded as a weapon against this threat. Despite party differences, both administrations showcased a similarity of purpose and intent in their domestic farm agendas, and in their foreign aid programs.

Truman's 1949 inaugural address outlined a plan to demonstrate the superiority of the American model abroad by ensuring people everywhere could achieve a "decent and satisfying life" under free, democratic governments.[7] Point Four on this list centered on international aid in food and agriculture. Truman's cabinet departments publicized the breadth of global poverty, and

[6] Olaf Larson, "Lessons from Rural Rehabilitation," *Land Policy Review* 9, no. 3 (Fall 1946), 13.
[7] Harry S. Truman, Inauguration Speech, January 20, 1949, Harry Truman Library, Independence, MO, https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/19/inaugural-address.

Congress responded the next year with enabling legislation. Point Four aid proved to be a key component of Truman's Cold War strategy, and it drew upon decades of domestic experience remaking agricultural models within the United States. The rural intervention and democratic nation-building the USDA had practiced for years would finally be exported whole-cloth, to a struggling world. This, the administration hoped, might stave off the spread of communism indefinitely.

Programs in Iran, Latin America, and elsewhere reveal the pivotal role played by the USDA in the administration of the Point Four program. Technical Assistance Agreements included USDA field staff and representatives from land-grant institutions. These organizations trained what they called "agricultural missionaries" to spread reforms and scientific knowledge even further afield. They also sponsored educational visits for foreign leaders who traveled to the United States and carried these lessons back to their home countries. One of the largest single examples of this method was the World Land Tenure Problems Conference held at the University of Wisconsin. Here, leaders from around the globe discussed their own challenges in the field of tenure reform, while receiving a strong dose of propaganda in Jeffersonian freeholding and democratization. American leaders saw land reform as a critical tool in the anti-communist arsenal, particularly in light of extensive Soviet propaganda campaigns on the subject. They worked intensely to understand and effect these reforms abroad in order to demonstrate their counter-narrative.

Truman's USDA also dedicated considerable attention to rural reform at home. The Family Farm Policy Review aimed to remake small American farms into a shining model for the world to emulate. It argued that democracy grew from a foundation of family farming and, as such, could only be sustained and increased through the prioritization of that model. In response

to the extended study, the Family Farm Policy Review program fought for expanded rural rehabilitation, for increased funding for the Rural Electrification Administration, and for the general improvement of rural quality of life in order to improve the position of small farmers as stakeholders in both capitalism and democracy. The effort continued to model the belief among policymakers that rural poverty bred unrest and radicalization.

Upon assuming the presidency, Eisenhower demonstrated similar conviction. His plan for agriculture's "human resources" and the eventually resulting Rural Development Program attacked the problem of rural poverty with on-farm training, employment assistance, and relocation aid. As it grew over the years, RDP took on watershed projects, healthcare clinic construction, and vocational training centers, which together amounted to intervention on a massive scale, quite in keeping with the programs that went before it.

Public Law 480 revealed a similar continuity on the international scene. Beyond surplus disposal, the program aimed to link foreign governments more closely with the United States. It also provided direct food relief, education, defense materials, and convertible currency to sway the citizens of those countries to adopt a more favorable view of America. The international school lunch program taught foreign children to see the United States as a place of benevolent provision, and encouraged them to adopt American foodways at the same time. US-sponsored schools and translations of US books helped cement these associations. Ultimately, while Eisenhower certainly valued P.L. 480 as a means of surplus disposal, he also embraced it as a tool of propagandizing foreign policy, highly valuable in the context of the Cold War.

P.L. 480 also proved highly popular at home. In the 1960 presidential election, both candidates Kennedy and Nixon campaigned on its expansion alongside domestic rural support programs. Once elected, Kennedy immediately set out to expand rural relief through his food

stamp program and Rural Areas Development initiative. While this plan demonstrated some continuity with previous programs, it simultaneously gave indications of the drastic changes facing US agriculture by supporting the transition of crop land into recreation sites and promoting non-agricultural job training in rural communities.

Like earlier leaders, Kennedy wielded P.L. 480 as a powerful weapon in his anti-communist armory. He expanded its framework to embrace more direct intervention in foreign land reform, and established USAID to provide additional mechanisms for the promotion of related changes abroad. His appointment of Governor Bill Daniel in Guam highlighted the ways in which his administration hoped to embed national identity and democracy through comprehensive agricultural programs in US territories as well. Daniel and others insisted that his reforms of Guamanian agriculture helped to establish the island as a "showcase of democracy" for the entire Pacific region.

Lyndon Johnson continued Kennedy's initiatives, similarly expanding the use of P.L. 480 to promote America's foreign policy interests of containing communism and fostering increased connections between the US and developing countries. He broadened the availability of international school lunch as a way to propagandize children and families both to see the United States as a friend and to reorient their diets to promote consumption of US produce. His USDA continued to spread the message of land tenure reform around the world. He also further expanded rural support programs and established new ones like the loan provisions in the Economic Opportunity Act.

By the late 1960s however, the United States faced a radically different rural map. Massive increases in farm productivity combined with massive decreases in necessary farm labor to drive people elsewhere in search of opportunity. Outmigration to urban areas had continued

unabated throughout the preceding century. The entirety of the US agricultural program could not stop this movement. National trends had continued to significantly reduce the number of Americans living in rural areas. Of those that remained in the country, well under half lived on farms.

At the end of the Johnson administration, rural life could no longer be equated with farm life. Calvin Beale, a demographer with USDA's newly created Economic Research Service, wrote of department officials wondering aloud if rural people weren't farming, "Well, what do they do?"[8] Despite confusion at USDA over these new patterns of settlement, rural life began to solidify within this new non-farm model. In the years that followed, rural outmigration leveled off and settled into a near equilibrium that has held to the present day. America's rural population declined just one tenth of one percent from 1970 to 1980 and lost only 1.47% from 1980 to 1990.[9] Rural poverty rates—while still higher than those in metro areas—similarly stabilized, declining from approximately thirty-five percent of households in 1960 to less than twenty percent in 1969, and remaining within a few percentage points of that level through the turn of the twenty-first century.[10]

The yeoman farmer of Jefferson's ideal did not disappear from American life, nor did he cease to be an important feature in the democratic national identity of the United States. However, the irrevocably altered agriculture sector made him less commonplace, and thus less practical as a policy tool for the pursuit of these aims. Instead, he would be immortalized, and the

[8] Population Reference Bureau, *Fifty Years of Demographic Change in Rural America,* January 1, 2003, https://www.prb.org/fiftyyearsofdemographicchangeinruralamerica/
[9] US Census Bureau, "Urban and Rural Populations in the US," accessed August 28, 2020, https://ourworldindata.org/grapher/urban-and-rural-populations-in-the-united-states
[10] USDA Economic Research Service, *Rural Poverty at a Glance,* Report # 100, July 2004.

mythology that grew to surround him would largely reflect the policy aims of these more than five decades.

In 1978, the famed radio broadcaster Paul Harvey delivered a speech to the Future Farmers of America convention titled "So God Made a Farmer." It rang with stirring depictions of dedication to one's calling, of hardship, of labor, and of care for one's family and neighbors. It painted exactly the image that rural policymakers from Jefferson to the Country Life Commission to Lyndon Johnson had hoped to instill and improve upon. In 2013 that speech became a Super Bowl advertisement for Dodge Ram trucks, viewed over twenty-four million times since it first aired. The accuracy of its depiction is less important than the tears of national nostalgia and patriotism it prompted across the United States that night, when Paul Harvey's voice echoed across the airwaves once more, reminding Americans of that ideal.[11]

> It had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners...somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed and rake and disc and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five mile drive to church. Somebody who'd bale a family together with the soft, strong bonds of sharing...Who would laugh–and then sigh–and then reply with smiling eyes...
> When his son says he wants to spend his life doing what dad does.
> So–God made a farmer.[12]

[11] Garance Franke-Ruta, "Paul Harvey's 1978 'So God Made a Farmer' Speech," *The Atlantic*, February 3, 2013, https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/02/paul-harveys-1978-so-god-made-a-farmer-speech/272816/ accessed September 30, 2020.
[12] Paul Harvey, "So God Made a Farmer," *Carlsbad Current-Argus* (Carlsbad, NM), May 13, 1986, 18.

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