

THE SOCIAL ECONOMICS
of Agriculture

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Revised Edition

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TO MY WIFE

PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

Much has happened in the social and economic realms of agriculture during the ten years since the first edition of this volume appeared. To bring the materials of the text up to date has resulted in the rewriting of a substantial part of the entire book. However, it is believed that by doing so it has been greatly strengthened both in content and subject-matter presentation. The effort has been made to use statistics as sparingly as possible, an objective which will certainly meet with the approval of the student. Also, a primary concern has been to maintain and improve the interest-carrying power of the book by presenting vital subject matter in a readable and attractive form. It has been found necessary in order not to have too large and expensive a book that several chapters of the original edition be omitted in the revision. In a way this is to be regretted, but it is believed that such care has been exercised in the deletion that the unity and comprehensiveness of the volume have been little impaired as a result.

In the large task involved in the revision of this text the author is greatly indebted first of all to the successive classes of students who have taken his course in *The Social Economics of Agriculture*. They are always a great inspiration to him and have furnished both directly and indirectly many valuable suggestions as to the improvement of the original edition. Next to the author, no one person has done a larger part of the work involved in the preparation of this text than has Miss Ruth Ritchie, Secretary of the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, who has typed the entire manuscript and helped in innumerable other ways. The author owes her a tremendous debt of gratitude for her very efficient help. To his colleague and former student, Dr. Robert E. Graham, Jr., the author wishes to express deep appreciation for his critical read-

ing of the entire manuscript and his valuable suggestions. He also wishes to express his thanks for the cooperation received from the Division of Economic Information in the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and to the Photo Duplication Service, Library of Congress, in connection with the matter of illustrations. Additionally, he is indebted to a large number of publishing houses for permission to use excerpts from their books; and to the writings of a host of individual authors, too numerous to mention specifically, but to which appropriate recognition has been given in footnotes.

In conclusion, the cordial reception accorded the first edition of this work and the friendly criticisms arising therefrom have been a source of much satisfaction to the author and he hopes that in some measure he is now able to express his appreciation tangibly by providing a still better book for an increasing usefulness.

WILSON GEE

University of Virginia
August 5, 1942

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

The past few years have forcefully demonstrated the paramount importance of agriculture as a phase of our national life. If we are to prosper as a people, both the farm and the urban industrialized interests must be equally considered, and directed into sound and effective functioning. It is impossible to neglect either of these basic elements in the public concern without the entire economic and social structure seriously suffering as a result.

This nation has during recent years become primarily urban and industrialized. Such a situation presents grave danger of either conscious or unconscious indifference on the part of the majority element to the interests of our farming people. The most effective way of combating such an unfortunate situation is through the process of education. The urban constituency must be informed in terms of the problems of agriculture and their vital relationship to the prosperity and welfare of the city. The rural minority must be educated as to the important bearing of the urban, industrialized interests upon those of the agricultural group. Through such a common understanding mutual sympathy is engendered toward a balanced program of development in the economic and social structure of our civilization.

In order that such a desirable goal may be attained, the economics and sociology of agriculture must receive increasing attention in the colleges and universities throughout the entire nation. Many schools will not be in position to offer more than one course in this field and will desire the cultural emphasis in the approach to the subject. The present text is well adapted to such a purpose.

In determining the content of this volume a thorough canvass has been made of the principal standard texts in agricultural economics and rural sociology. The frequency of the topics was noted,

and upon the basis of such emphasis the chapter divisions were selected. Such a dissection and subsequent synthesis it is believed has included a large part of what is vital in the customary courses in the two disciplines.

There is today a growing tendency toward sharper specialization in the field of rural life studies. On the other hand, many of the outstanding leaders in the social sciences are arguing that we have already too finely drawn lines of demarcation between one social discipline and another, and that the most effective approach toward understanding a problem is through all possible avenues. The term *social economics of agriculture* makes possible such a venture, enabling us to view the agricultural problem not simply as an economic, sociological, historical, or governmental one, but in the combined perspective of all these approaches. Thus the present volume is to be viewed as an effort to synthesize the more pertinent thought in the social economic approach to the problems of agriculture. That the book is a teachable one has been demonstrated by the author's twelve years of experience in handling a course based on the materials included.

The author is indebted to a variety of sources too numerous for individual mention, but appropriate recognition has been made by footnotes. In the second, fourth, fifth, twenty-fourth, and twenty-seventh chapters, he has made liberal use of materials from his earlier volume on *The Place of Agriculture in American Life*, but these have been reworked into the new setting. Frequent and extensive quotations have been cited where they have contributed to a more adequate presentation of the particular topic under consideration. Permissions to use these have generously been granted by the publishers. It is a pleasure to express the appreciation due Miss Ruth Ritchie and Mrs. A. S. Hall on the office staff of the Institute for Research in the Social Sciences at the University of Virginia for the cheerfulness and efficiency with which they have typed the manuscript and helped in other ways to prepare it for the printer.

WILSON GEE

University of Virginia
September, 1932

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