

AMERICAN FARMERS' AND RURAL ORGANIZATIONS

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FARMERS' AND RURAL
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BY DAVID E. LINDSTROM

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FOREWORD

Few textbooks or books for supplementary reading are available on the subject of Farmers' and Rural Organizations, though several good books were written on farmers' movements and agricultural organizations in the United States in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Records of these organizations and movements have not been brought up through the second and third decades for effective classroom and local leader use. The author hopes, therefore, that the present work will serve to review previous works and bring the records up-to-date, and to round out such records by references to the present-day works on organizations in which farm people participate.

The forms and functions of organizations in which farm people take part—farmer's clubs, farm bureau units, granges, farmer's union locals, rural community clubs, and other organizations in which they find a freedom of expression different from that found in other groups—are of real concern. The more one works with these organizations the more one is brought to feel their importance in building attitudes, shaping forms of social organization, and affecting the lives of farm people. Then, too, the county, state, and national branches of some of these organizations unquestionably have had considerable influence on local, state and national agricultural policies. Contact with these groups impresses one with the opportunities open to farm people through them to secure social, educational, and economic benefits not otherwise open to rural people.

The present work has been organized for use into five parts: Part I, The Field of Farmers' and Rural Organizations; Part II, Historical Backgrounds; Part III, Present-Day Farmers' Organizations; Part IV, Comparative Structures, Functions and Processes; and Part V, National Policies, Rural Values and Human Welfare. Selected readings and questions to encourage further study are listed at the end of each chapter. Although this material is intended for a first course in colleges, it can also be used in

advanced classes in high schools. The list of questions at the end of each chapter are therefore divided into two sections: one for the use of high school classes and one for classes in college. Leaders of farmers' and rural organizations will, it is anticipated, find this book of use for general reading and for constant reference and for use in adult educational classes or study groups.

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The author is especially grateful to his wife for her constant help and inspiration in the preparation of this work; and to H. M. Haulin, Professor of Agricultural Education, University of Illinois for editing the manuscript.

DAVID EDGAR LINDSTROM.

FOREWORD

A college professor was recently quoted as saying, "You and I were born individuals; we live our individual lives; and we die as individuals. Everything we do is individualistic." It would be hard to make a statement farther from the truth. The facts are that we are born into groups; that groups have an important part in shaping our personalities, our very "selves"; and nothing that we do is without social motivations or social effects.

We have tended too much to think of farmers as individuals living autonomous lives on their own quarter-sections. They never were mere individuals. Cooperative action among our pioneer farmers was quite as common as it is today though cooperation took forms which have now largely disappeared.

Rural life without rural organizations would be rugged and primitive. Rural civilization is largely a product of rural organizations and institutions. We cannot understand an individual farmer without understanding the organizations that affect him.

Rural organizations of many kinds have grown up among us almost unnoticed. Their number and complexity become apparent as we read Dr. Lindstrom's systematic presentation of them. They are highly significant not only in rural life but in the life of the nation.

It is of the greatest importance not only that we know about these organizations, but that we become constructively critical of them. We may not assume that all they do is wise and good. Farm people must learn to participate intelligently in them and to influence their leadership and policies.

Farmers are a minority group in the United States and they must organize to protect themselves and to influence public opinion. An adverse public can make the lot of the farmers very hard. Farmers must recognize that they are a minority group and must learn to operate effectively as a minority.

Though they are a minority in the population, farmers are as yet a powerful minority with an influence upon national and world affairs out of proportion to their numbers. They still retain some

of the prerogatives they had when they constituted a much larger part of the population. One of the best examples is their influence in the Senate of the United States. Because we provided at the beginning of our national life for two senators for each state, the agricultural states are still able to control that powerful body. Their control is of especial significance because the Senate helps to determine the foreign policy of the country. Legislators are, in turn, much influenced by organizations, so that farmers' organizations have a powerful role in determining our relations with other countries. Considering the present state of our foreign relations, the rural people have a grave responsibility for determining through their organizations whether we shall have imperialism or good neighborliness, one world, or many worlds, war or peace.

Dr. Lindstrom's book should be of help in understanding the rural organizations we have and how and why they have developed. Farm people need the background it provides as they attempt to learn how to participate effectively in their organizations and how to make their organizations serve their own and the public's interests.

H. M. HAMLIN.

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