From the Editor

Agrarianism, Agricultural Development, and the Farm Crisis.

The articles in this issue cover a wide range of topics. Yet they are related in raising some important questions about the direction that agricultural development has taken in the modern world. Whether "developers" are trying to pull subsistence growers into the market to make them produce a surplus or whether they are forcing smaller producers out of business, many development proponents are making assumptions that are being challenged. Those who call the increasing loss of full-time farming opportunities a "farm crisis", are claiming that we have reached a point where, if we don't make fundamental policy changes, we will lose something valuable, and perhaps not be able to regain it. "Agrarianism" is the belief that the agricultural life is valuable and that it should be available to those who want to pursue it. It is also the belief that farming is valuable not just because it produces necessaries, such as food and fiber, but because the way of life of farming is good. What the actual content of agrarianism is (e.g. what forms of agricultural life are valuable and why), and what implications the agrarian claim has for public policy, are questions that need to be addressed in assessing whether we are, indeed, experiencing a farm crisis. There are, of course, other senses in which we might speak of a farm crisis. For example, we might suppose that in the long run a larger number of more labor intensive farmers do a more economical job of producing than a smaller number of capital intensive producers.

James Montmarquet, in "Philosophical Foundations for Agrarianism", distinguishes the weaker and stronger claims that may be associated with agrarianism. The weakest claim is that agriculture is an honorable (and virtuous) way of life. That it is a superior way, and that for this reason it deserves special government support are obviously stronger claims. A more radical form of agrarianism claims that access to productive land should be given to anyone who wants it. Montmarquet's paper is an attempt to evaluate the use of various philosophical traditions to support these claims. The final task of the paper is to find a way of supporting the strongest of the four claims without, at the same time, adopting principles that will warrant a "*general* indictment of the haves on behalf of the have-nots, for then we have gone beyond the purposes of a specifically agrarian philosophy." Whatever *rights* that such a philosophy supports must be supported in terms of the personal value of the relationship to land rather than on purely economic values.

Tom Auxter's paper, "Poetry and Self-Knowledge in Rural Life," undertakes a similar task — to describe a type of agricultural life whose value is not predominantly economic — in the modern sense of that word — and to identify the locus of that value. To achieve this, Auxter draws on the concept of *self-knowledge* as it is developed by Hegel. "The goal of self-knowledge is to arrive at a comprehensive idea of how various beings are related to each other and to the rest of the world so that the self can figure out how it can best relate to, and fit into, this nexus." Auxter uses this notion to criticise the type of "naive self-consciousness" that is implicit in the economic notion of progress that is called upon to support the current conception of "agricultural development." One feature of the current farm crisis is that it is experienced by many who have subscribed to the view that economic progress is the avenue for increasing the quality of life. To know yourself as merely a producer or controller of your environment, or consumer, is a form of naive self-consciousness. That we are also a part of nature, and not merely its controller, is recognized by the "wisdom traditions" of many cultures whose values are not adequately acknowledged by the proponents of the industrialization of agriculture.

The often unquestioned assumption that agricultural development improves the quality of life is also examined by Peggy Barlett and Peter Brown in their paper, "Agricultural Development and the Quality of Life: An Anthropological View." To examine this assumption they develop a "cultural relativistic approach" to identify quality of life indicators. This approach examines perceived needs and desires in rela-

tionship to the objective reality of the life circumstances that enable these needs and desires to be met. They also distinguish between two forms of agricultural development, which they define as the intensification of food production systems. The dominant model in contemporary developing societies has been capital intensive, and its mechanisms are maintained by the market pressures on consumers. So, "as long as the developmental process pushes farmers to be more and more involved in the market process, the market will exert pressures to expand their perceived 'needs.' Since the perceived ability to meet these needs is an essential component of the quality of life, agricultural development is inherently incapable of increasing the level of satisfaction and the quality of life among farmers."

The American farmer is not merely victim of the market process, according to Francis Moore Lappe, but of some basic contradictions in values (or assumptions about how things work best) that are generally shared by Americans. In her paper, "The Family Farm: Caught in the Contradictions of American Values," Lappe examines the question, "Why, if it is true that most Americans believe that family farm agriculture is superior to any other, do they remain quiet witnesses to its gradual — now accelerated — demise?" Lappe argues that there are steps that can be taken to arrest the demise, and that the basic values of freedom, democracy, and community, which most Americans share, provide a compelling reason for protecting the family farm. The reason that these steps are not being taken, however, is because "Americans swallow the fiction of the free market . . ." But for the free market to work effectively for producers, they must be able to predict, to some degree, production costs and markets. However, only the "superfarms" are able to control production costs, and these are the survivors of the "free-market" system. Taken as dogmas, the market and the unlimited accumulation of private productive property "lead inevitably to the concentration of economic power, now, in farming just as in the rest of the economy."

Is there, in fact, a significantly large share of the U.S. population, who share or sympathize with agrarian values? What are the chances for a sustained and effective farm protest movement in the U.S.? Nicholas Ellig, in "Issues in the Analysis of Contemporary Farm Protest," identifies seven major issues that researchers should address to assess the effectiveness of current farm protest. Among the questions that need to be asked are 1) Is there the type of shared identity among farmers, even though they are not a homogeneous social category, that will sustain protest activity of a broad scope? 2) Is there a new populism evident in the U.S. today that builds upon the populism of the 19th century? and 3) Are there among the non-farm population adequate elements to support an effective protest movement?

An important impediment to the success of any farm protest movement is the widespread belief that the current farm crisis is the fault of American Farmers. The belief that farms fail because of indolence or poor business practices is even held by many farmers themselves, and supported by many "mainstream" social scientists. In his paper, "Agriculture and the Internationalization of the United States Economy," Charles Wood criticises the narrower orientation that has so often characterized American sociology during the first half of the twentieth century. Instead, he applies a "world-systems" perspective to the analysis of the current farm crisis. Among the factors affecting American farmers is the increase in the instability of farm income as agriculture enters the volatile world market. While the "deindustrialization" of America has encouraged the exporting of raw materials (including agricultural products), the combination of a high dollar value and increased agricultural export competition from third world countries has caused U.S. farmers to face stiff competition from producers around the world. An additional competitive disadvantage to U.S. agriculture is its dependence on foreign labor in order to compete with third world countries which are able to maintain low wage levels, and the difficulties that foreign-labor recruitment encounters as "an issue that cuts across a bewildering spectrum of political factions and interest groups."

While the dominant mode of agricultural development throughout the world has been capital intensive, "green revolution" technology has failed to penetrate to small farmers in many parts of the world, who operate with a limited land and capital resource base. Such farmers need low-input alternatives which allow them to regenerate their resource base, while they continue to produce for food and income. Charles Francis in his paper "Rationality of New Technology for Small Farmers in the Tropics" argues that new "appropriate technologies" should be designed that are "management-" and "information-intensive."

Brian Schultz, on the other hand, challenges the assumption behind a great deal of agricultural research, that technology that increases production stability by minimizing seasonal variation in yields and reducing the risk of crop

failure, will necessarily benefit the small producer. One must ask "not only how stability will initially be enhanced by new technologies, but also what else will be lost, who will really benefit from the changes in methods, and what alternatives might ultimately be more equitable."

At the same time, a concern for protecting "environmental stability" seems to be an important motivating force behind the Environmental Protectionist's critique of the "developmental" (including agricultural development) attitude. Supporting this position, Bryan Norton argues in his paper "Agricultural Development and Environmental Policy: Conceptual Issues," is the belief that an ecosystem is healthy only if it is, in some sense, "stable." "Stability," however, in this context, can have several senses, which can be used to distinguish between what Norton calls "Conservationists" vs. "Preservationists." Conservationists require the type of stability that can only be achieved by management practices designed to keep a system producing a fairly limited range of humanly useful products. Preservationists, on the other hand, argue for the superior desirability of the dynamic stability of non-managed ecosystems. Norton is concerned with adjudicating conflicting claims made by what he calls radical developmentalists, conservationists, moderate preservationists, and radical preservationists, especially in relation to the question of the preservation of tropical rain forests versus their conversion to agriculturally productive systems.

In returning to the question about the American non-farm population's attitude toward farmers, David Danbom reviews six major U.S. history survey texts commonly used in courses in terms of the quantity and quality of agricultural and rural history they contain. While some reflect to a greater extent the resurgent interest in agricultural and rural history that the discipline is experiencing, none of them get passing marks in avoiding what Danbom calls an urban and anti-rural bias. The more benign form of this bias is based on a preference, by the authors, for urban primary sources. A more malignant form is based on a post-World War II generation of scholars who have reacted to earlier historians who saw rural people in quasi-Jeffersonian terms. The later scholars turned this image on its head and have regarded rural people as narrow, bigoted, and selfish, where they were regarded at all. This newer attitude has affected an entire generation of students, and has nearly destroyed agricultural and rural history as an area of interest to scholars. It is this same attitude, perhaps, which Charles Wood accuses social scientists of holding when they "blame the victim." All of the texts that Danbom reviews are guilty of this anti-rural bias, even in the texts in which rural history is covered more adequately.

The land-grant system has become one of the most controversial components of the U.S. research and development system. External critics have repeatedly criticised it "for developing technologies that are primarily oriented to the technical needs of large farmers and agribusiness, while generally ignoring the more pressing needs of small farmers and the rural poor." In the final paper, Frederick Buttel discusses the prevailing value conflicts and ethical issues in land-grant research, extension, and teaching, and identifies some basic philosophical and methodological differences among various land-grant college disciplines and subdisciplines that effect their research orientation. An important issue requiring debate concerns the proper role of public agricultural research. Should research be directed primarily to provide industry with fundamental information that it can use to develop commodity inputs to be purchased by farmers, or should it aim at developing alternative technologies oriented toward minimizing purchased inputs? A debate of this type is yet to take place, Buttel notes, "which is reflected in the fact that an explicit public research policy has never been formulated."

All of these papers raise important questions, not merely about where, in fact, our current policies are taking us, but whether we might want to reassess the desirability of going in those directions.

Agricultural Literacy Test — An Invitation. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation has given funding, over the course of the last six years, to 18 private liberal arts colleges and 15 land-grant colleges to develop curricular enrichment programs with the objective of increasing the level of "agricultural literacy" among the general student body. In most cases, it has been liberal arts students who have been specifically targeted to benefit from these programs. But even agriculture students, some have argued, often lack the broad range of knowledge required for the evaluation of alternative agricultural policies, and, therefore, lack the credentials for either leadership or good citizenship in this important sphere.

To assist in the evaluation of these various Kellogg funded programs, we are attempting to devise an instrument that will indicate a person's level of agricultural literacy. This instrument, we hope, will have value as a pre- and post-test to measure the success of various ag-

riculturally enriched liberal arts courses in increasing agricultural literacy. The question, then, arises, "What type of knowledge should the generally educated person have about agriculture in order to be agriculturally literate — i.e. to be able to participate in the general task of assessing alternative agricultural policies, practices, and structures, and to understand discussions and debates about these topics?"

To aid us in compiling a list of questions to include on the instrument we are designing, we are asking experts from various disciplines which offer a perspective about the general agricultural enterprise to identify what, from their particular perspective, the agriculturally literate person should know. We understand the risk in translating this basic knowledge into simple factual statements that can be used on a multiple-choice questionnaire. Nevertheless, we are asking for your help in identifying such statements. Please list five to ten factual statements, knowledge of which, from the point of view of your discipline or sub-discipline, should be known by the agriculturally literate person. Send them to the editor.

Letters to the Editor

As a faculty member in an agricultural college, I read with interest the excellent articles on "Women and Agriculture" in the latest "Agriculture and Human Values". Cornelia Flora's article clearly summarizes the continuing disenfranchisement of women in agriculture, despite their ageless integrality.

While I applaud Celia Weidemann's argument for a Home Economics Extension Service (and I would add the entire Agricultural Extension) that addresses both the productive and reproductive roles of farm women, one must realize that a de facto segregation of the sexes exists at Land Grant colleges today. The chasm between the agricultural and home economics departments must be bridged before any truly cooperative work can begin. One avenue of interaction involves the encouragement of female students to participate in the agricultural science curriculum. In addition, courses on farming systems — including discussions on nutrition, intrahousehold dynamics, social and economic factors, and agroecology — should be required for all agricultural students.

Women in agriculture, however, as in other non-traditional professions, must not regard "acceptance" within agribusiness or the agricultural academe, based on their acceptance of a stereotype, as their sole motivation for study. Scrutiny should be placed on agricultural systems based on research funded by agrichemical grant sources (as in much of the research at the Land Grant colleges today). These "packages" should not be construed as prescriptive for all farms, particularly in areas of limited resources. In my work overseas, I was amazed at the technological gulf between what I had been taught and the actual farming systems I faced. "Development" companies, in addition to ignoring the role of women (as illustrated in several of the articles in this issue), were quick to espouse and distribute agrichemicals (some already banned in the U.S.) to farmers whose traditional practices had preserved the land without the adverse effects and intensive capital investment of "modern" farming.

The "Women and Agriculture" issue is saluted as a first step in enlarging the traditional view of farm women. We are now faced with the task of getting those in the profession who need it the most to read it and deal with it.

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