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Historical Goals and Political Behavior in Agriculture

IMMEDIATELY upon considering an assignment such as "historic goals relating to agricultural structure and income," the mind is crowded with a plethora of goals which farmers are commonly supposed to hold: farm ownership, family size farms, income stability and income equity, parity living conditions with urban people, educational opportunities, free enterprise, freedom, democracy, and so on.

At the same time, the orderly mind, when confronted with such a confusion of goals, seeks to tidy up this litter by attempting to establish some sort of a pattern or system for categorizing and arranging these goals. At once, the student is confronted with the problem of level of goals. He faces the task of sorting, weighing, and classifying a variety of farmer wants into goals, sub-goals, and instruments, which are merely means to goals.

He becomes entangled in such questions as: When does a means for achieving a goal become sufficiently institutionalized so that it, in itself, becomes a goal independent of the further goods or services it may create? For example, is family farm ownership an ultimate goal, or is it a sub-goal of the farmer's larger goals of economic security and political democracy? Or should family farm ownership be regarded merely as a means — an instrument which has been effective under a peculiar combination of historical circumstances in helping to achieve economic security? From this viewpoint, does the family farm have any greater significance than parity income payments or price supports? Are there, indeed, any ultimate worldly goals other than the one of "maximizing human happiness"? Are not, then, all farmer goals merely a graduated series of means for achieving happiness? Thus, this reasoning process runs on inclusively and fruitlessly.

Finally, the student seeking to identify farmer goals and, therefore, inevitably attempting to distinguish between ends and means, is brought up short by the pragmatist's basic questioning of the scientific validity of separating social ends from means. Having been connected with two academic institutions, one of which might be characterized as leaning toward the Platonic in its approach to research, and the other toward the pragmatic, I feel that I should remain a mug-wump in this open-end discussion of the role of means and ends in setting the framework for research.

Nevertheless, on pragmatic grounds (to use this word in its popular sense) I am going to deviate somewhat from my original assignment of discussing the historical goals of American farmers, because a discussion of goals would not do the job which I think the committee desires here. I believe that these goals were viewed by the program committee merely as a method of gaining an understanding of the social and political obstacles to "adjustments in the scale of individual farm operations, in reallocation of resources between agricultural products, and in shifts of labor resources to nonfarm activities." Merely outlining farmer goals throws little light on the question of what adjustments in agriculture are politically and socially acceptable to the American commercial farmer. Little light is shed on the question because if such goals are to have that harmonious and satisfying consistency which makes for neat and tidy analysis, they must be stated in large and inclusive terms — such as freedom, security, democracy, education — which are so general that they are almost meaningless as guideposts to the politically possible. When farmer goals are made more specific, they become, on their face, so inconsistent and self-contradictory, when extended over the dimensions of time and place, that they only baffle and confuse the observer. Why, for example, do Nebraska beef farmers and Maryland poultry producers seem to cling more loyally to the concept of free enterprise than do North Dakota wheat farmers or Tennessee tobacco growers? Even more confusingly, why do Iowa corn farmers customarily give political support to the symbol of free enterprise at the same time they seek government price fixing and accept government production regulation?

Therefore, rather than to discuss farmers' goals per se, I believe I can more usefully attempt a selective interpretation of the farmer's social and political psychology. Moreover, because my training is in political science, my discussion will focus upon political behavior. What is the farmer's political temper? What are his fears, values, motivations? How is his psychology reflected in his voting behavior? What limitations, if any, do the farmer's political attitudes place upon his elected representatives' choice of alternatives in agricultural policy? In other words, does the farmer political mind set limits within which the governmental decision-making process must develop its policies?

In such an analysis, farmer wants and needs — whether immediate or far distant — can be examined without attempting to identify them as ends or means. But, although such an analysis avoids the dualism of distinguishing between ends and means and of appraising them separately, this selective interpretation of the farmer political mind may have the weakness of distortion and over-simplification. I realize I will be setting up a prototype which has no such distinct existence in reality.

Research methodology in political psychology is not yet sufficiently advanced to isolate and weigh the various determinants of voting behavior of any sector of the population. Nor have techniques yet been developed which make possible the reconstruction of the psychological field of the individual citizen as he enters the polling booth. But

primitive as the field of political psychology is, we all know that there is no one farmer mind. The farmer, like all citizens, belongs to many publics. He is a member of many overlapping and conflicting groups. He has a variety of conflicting needs, interests, motivations, and wants arising out of his membership in these groups.

Even as an "economic man" alone, the farmer's personality is split by his membership in diverse producer interest groups. The farm group is a conglomerate of heterogeneous interests, arising out of differences in commodity, region, economic class, and so on. Hence, when we speak of the "farmer political mind," we know we are depicting an oversimplified creature who has no existence in the blooming buzzing confusion of the real world.

How, for example, can we piece together a composite figure out of such diverse personalities as the head of a western corporation farm and a Mississippi sharecropper? A subsistence Negro farmer and an Iowa operator of a commercial family-type farm? A Montana farmer gambling huge sums on weather and market and a farmer scratching out a "low input-low output" living in the upland Piedmont?

Nevertheless, I believe that with all its shortcomings, a broad composite picture of group behavior can provide valuable insights into political behavior. Despite the many egos in which the farmer is clothed, I believe that a psychological prototype of him can be drawn which will be useful in explaining the political reasons for the shape and substance of our present farm policies. By "psychological prototype" I mean a sort of group psychological norm, or set of attitudes, which strongly influences a group's behavior. I believe that despite their great differences, commercial, politically activated farmers — because they have repeatedly experienced the same common coercions — have certain common denominators in psychological characteristics which are important determinants of their political behavior.

Undoubtedly, the use of the concept of social and economic class for interpreting collective behavior is too static and all-inclusive a theory to fit the realities of our dynamic, diversified, democratic society. Nevertheless, when we attempt to analyze agrarian political behavior, it is meaningful to characterize the American commercial farmer as having a mind that is essentially "middle class" in its anxieties, values, motivations, and aspirations. As the farmer has become commercialized, his entrepreneurial operations have caused him to take on the psychology of a middle-class businessman, to bury deep back in his mind his old consciousness of being a manual worker.

The quest for security is a universal drive of all mankind. Therefore, to say that the single most important motivating force in the middle-class political mind is the drive for security does not differentiate middle-class psychology from that of any other group. But the middle-class quest for social and economic security has its own peculiar characteristics. The middle-class security drive is one of protecting and maintaining a previously attained economic position and social status. Generally, this drive is manifested in fear and distrust of groups

whom the middle class views as both above and below it on the economic and social scale. These groups are big business and manual workers. The middle-class prototype sees himself in the vulnerable position of being squeezed between these two groups. We all know that this middle-class fear in Germany was behind Hitler's rise to power.

For the past hundred years the agricultural population has lived in an environmental squeeze which has bred fear of losing position to the groups in the industrial sector. Agriculture consistently has been in the unfavorable position of lagging in its adjustment to the evolving price and market economy. It has had to struggle constantly to get in step with that economy. Although rapid industrialization and urbanization in Europe and America brought about a temporary scarcity of agricultural products from 1885 to 1914, technological change in agricultural production was reversing this condition by 1914.

Although the catastrophe of a world war twice temporarily halted this trend toward overproduction, farmers for the past 50 years have been living in the unfavorable economic situation of having to contract their supply to fit demands of the industrial sector. This environmental squeeze in which farmers have been living has caused the farmer's security drive to take the middle-class form of attempting to maintain a previously attained favorable relationship with the other economic groups. This fear of losing position in the economy is behind the American farmer's almost blind allegiance to "parity." "Parity" to him has become a symbol of equality with other groups, while 90 percent of parity has become a symbol of security. Farmer loyalty to the concept of parity, then, probably places one set of outer limits on the scale of choices open to the farmer's elected representatives in developing a new agricultural price program. Such a program, whatever its form, undoubtedly will have to include a parity provision which closely resembles the provision for 90 percent of parity, if it is to quiet farmers' security anxieties.

The farmer's allegiance to the parity concept also reflects a fear and distrust of groups in the industrial sector. Historically, the farmer has consistently disliked and feared "the monied interests." The potentiality of agrarian mobilization against the business community has been and still is of great political significance. Historically, farmer fear and resentment of monied interests has been expressed in agrarian crusades against excessive railroad rates, eastern banks, corporations and monopolies, the grain exchange, the harvester trust, and the jute and binder twine trust, and so on and on.

Today's farmer has not lost his old fear of big business. This distrust is always at the back of his mind as a potential threat to the farmer-businessman alliance, which is the central axis of the Republican Party. The farmer does not believe that "what is good for General Motors is good for the rest of the country." He does not subscribe to the trickle theory of economic prosperity. He prefers to share directly, as an equal partner, in prosperity.

For the same reasons that the farmer fears big business groupings,

he also distrusts labor, particularly organized labor, as a threat to his economic status. The farmer is probably more anti-labor than is the business community. Certainly we know, on the basis of overt performance, that the farmer who is a large employer of labor has the attitude of a 19th century industrial capitalist toward unions and right to organize.

But the problem to which we want to address ourselves specifically here is: How does the farmer's security drive affect the development of agricultural policy? How does it affect his attitude toward governmental intervention in economic life? How does his attitude toward use of the instrument of government affect his voting behavior? Does his attitude toward government conflict with his voting behavior? If so, how does the conflict affect the process of representation, and consequently agricultural policy.

The farmer commonly has been pictured as a laissez-faireist, a rugged individualist who fears or distrusts government. But the farmer's historical performance proves that he has not been reluctant to use the instrument of government to better his lot. He has never been willing to abide by the operation of beneficent economic laws when they were working hardships on him. Also, despite the late H. L. Mencken's allusions to the "Bible Belt," the farmer has not been willing just to "take his troubles to the Lord and leave them there."

Historically, the agrarian group has been the sector in the population which has pushed very hard to bring government into economic life. Agrarian publics, from the days of the Grangers and Populists movements, have crusaded periodically to push government into the economic arena. In the first place, they have wanted to have government act as a regulator of economic life. Secondly, off and on during the past hundred years they have wanted government to act as an agent for dispensing positive social services. Since the days of the McNary-Haugen public of the 1920's, farmers have accepted the need for positive governmental assistance in maintaining their economic equality with other groups. Thus, the psychology of the farmer has been an important factor in the evolution of the so-called "welfare state."

But without examining the farmer's historical record, we still probably could predict what the farmer's future attitude toward the use of government will be under given circumstances. We have only to consider certain factors in his psychology and in his environment. The first factor which determines the farmer's attitude toward the role of government is his middle-class feeling of being in a majority position. A group which feels that it is in a minority characteristically rejects the possibility of governmental assistance. For example, labor in the 19th century was acting like a minority in its fear and distrust of government, which for labor was symbolized by the injunction. Labor had no hope of controlling government and of making it serve its needs. Consequently, under the leadership of Gompers, labor sought salvation through toe-to-toe slugging in the economic arena.

In contrast, the farmer, despite his steadily diminishing numbers,

has maintained his majority psychology. The first census showed that 80 to 90 percent of the people lived on farms. The last census revealed that about this proportion now live off farms. Still, the farmer feels that he is in a position to control and use government, and despite the statistics of the census, this majority psychology is not too unrealistic. The reasons are: The general acceptance by all sectors of the population of the philosophy of agricultural fundamentalism and the overrepresentation of rural interests in our legislative bodies give the farmer a political majority position which he no longer has population-wise. His feeling of being a majority, which singlehandedly can call the political tune, is reflected in his spurning of any alliance with labor, and his unwillingness to make concessions to business as a price of the business community's support.

Secondly, the farmer's drive for security and his economic circumstances combine to force the farmer toward government. Political psychologists, in studying the problem of what activates a group politically, have discovered that the factor which is almost always present when groups become politically activated is a group feeling of insecurity resulting from a deterioration of the circumstances in which the group lives. This causal factor explains the paradox of some depressed groups living quietly and submissively for years in abject poverty and misery, while other groups, who are comparatively much better off, act quickly to remedy the slightest economic or social ill. A change or a threatened change for the worse in the conditions of living creates that consciousness of a common need which stimulates a group to seek political redress.

For a hundred years, the commercial farmer has been living under adverse environmental circumstances because of agriculture's tendency to expand more readily than it contracts and because of the relatively inelastic demand for agricultural products. It is the insecurity which the violent fluctuations in agricultural income create which has turned farmers toward government.

It is no historical accident that the great waves of agrarian discontent have coincided with the periods when the terms of trade were particularly unfavorable to agriculture. It is significant that each of these agrarian movements sought to remedy agricultural ills through government. The farmer, then, has been oriented toward government because the economic instability of his product poses a constant threat to his security.

In our political vernacular, we have come to identify liberalism with a sympathetic interest in bettering the lot of the common man. Because labor has historically been in an under-dog position in our economy, the liberal is frequently characterized as a person with pro-labor sympathies. Probably because of his anti-labor bias, then the farmer is commonly pictured as a conservative. But, if conservatism is defined as an unwillingness to try new methods, then the farmer cannot be described as a conservative. In his drive to protect his security, the farmer always has been willing to try new and radically different methods.

He is not afraid to experiment. When his security is sufficiently threatened he is always willing, as someone has said, to try a new pill. The danger in this psychology to the development of sound agricultural policy is that the farmer may accept nostrums and palliatives which cannot cure his economic ills.

It is a mistake to think that violence is solely the tool of a proletarian mob. From the days of Shay's Rebellion and the Virginia and Maryland tobacco growers' revolt to the days of the Farmers' Holiday Movement, the farmer has demonstrated that he can resort to violence if his security is sufficiently threatened. This action does not mean that the farmer is inherently a revolutionist. But it does mean that the farmer, too, will take violent action to protect his peculiar type of picket line.

I started out by saying that the drive for security is the common denominator which gives a pattern to farmer political behavior. This common denominator provides an explanation for the apparent difference in attitudes among the various commodity groups toward government intervention. It explains why elected representatives who are at opposite ends of the liberal-conservative spectrum on almost all issues will be found voting together on the "farm problem." Why, for example, do Senator Karl Mundt, conservative South Dakota Republican, and Lister Hill, liberal Alabama Democrat, have the same voting record on the 10 or 12 key votes on farm programs since 1947? The answer is, of course, the intensity of the insecurity psychology which the economic behavior of wheat and cotton has created in their constituents. Generally, the political formula holds that the greater the insecurities created by the economic behavior of his crop, the stronger the producer's drive for security, and, consequently, the greater his willingness to use government to obtain security.

Let us take wheat and cotton as examples of commodities which have been driven to a need for government aid. Every crop has its own special assortment of hazards. But wheat and cotton seem to have had an undue share. Wheat must constantly face the risk of low rainfall. Moreover, certain secular trends have put both commodities in a chronic state of over-expansion. Wheat is a victim of a change in consumer eating habits. Cotton is the victim of substitution of new synthetic fibres for cotton. New farm technology has been particularly effective in increasing wheat and cotton yields. Moreover, in farm production neither has economically realistic substitution alternatives. In contrast, the corn farmer faces fewer hazards from the weather. Soil and weather provide him with substitute crop alternatives. Also, his feed can be diverted from hogs to feeder cattle, or even to dairy cattle or poultry.

This difference in the economic circumstances of their commodity appears to the casual observer — at least during certain periods in the economic cycle — to have created in the wheat farmer and the corn-hog farmer differing attitudes toward governmental intervention. But does this mean that the wheat farmer and the corn-hog farmer have different

basic psychologies? When subjected to similar economic coercions, the hog farmer's security drive will become as strong as that of the wheat farmer. I believe that the recent political behavior of Iowa farmers and their Congressional representatives support this conclusion.

Before leaving the subject of the farmer's attitude toward government, I should mention one other phenomenon in the farmer's political psychology, for it has had an important influence on agricultural programs. The farmer has been mislabeled as a political conservative also because he, like millions of other Americans, is the victim of a sort of political schizophrenia. He suffers from what Felix Frankfurter in his little book, The Public and Its Government, describes as an "unresolved inner conflict."

What did Frankfurter mean by the "unresolved inner conflict"? He means that a citizen who feels the squeeze of his own environment appeals to the government for positive assistance to extricate him. But at the same time, he holds tight to the political symbols (such as least governmental intervention is best, and every tub should stand on its own bottom) which he has inherited from an earlier revolutionary-frontier period. Therefore, the farmer who does not experience the environmental squeeze of the laboring man and of the businessman is quite prepared to apply against them the full force of his political symbolism — even though he consistently violates those symbols where his own felt needs are concerned. Thus, because of this "unresolved inner conflict" in his political philosophy, this political schizophrenia, if you will, the farmer is prepared to be a "welfare state" man where his own immediate interests are concerned, and at the same time, a laissez-faireist where other groups are involved.

This inconsistency in farmer thinking about the proper role of government has had an important effect on agricultural policy. It has meant that agricultural policy has not been built upon the democratic concept of the right and the need of all groups to equal governmental assistance. Rather, agricultural policy has been built upon a power struggle process in which political might makes right. In this process, the economically most disadvantaged groups in agriculture largely have been immobilized politically. For instance, in the one-party South a caste system keeps the low-income Negro group from participating in intra-party decisions. With political immobilization of the economically most disadvantaged, farm policy has become oriented around the needs of the commercial, politically activated farm groups. The regressive nature of agricultural policy is not the result of the Machiavellian machinations of the big planters of the South, the imperial western ranchers, the owners of factories in the field on the West Coast, or the corporation farmers in the Midwest. Rather, the regressiveness in farm policy is due to the unresolved inner conflict in the minds of the middle group of farmers who do not see and appreciate the need for also adapting governmental services to the peculiar needs of low-income farm groups.

For this reason, suggesting that the farm problem can be solved by

an all-out program for aiding sub-marginal producers to move off farms into industrial employment is probably politically unrealistic. However economically sound such a proposal is, it probably would be politically unacceptable. The middle-class farmer mind sets the outer limits on political choices in farm policy. Although this mind feels the need for welfare services for its own group, it has failed to see the need for that totality of welfare measures, which such an all-out program would require if it were to be carried out in a humane and responsible fashion.

The fact that farmers have not committed themselves to the permanency of welfare state measures has an important effect upon the manner in which agricultural policy is developed. Because agricultural programs still are considered to be emergency measures to meet temporary situations of maladjustment, agricultural policy has been developed in a negative, piecemeal and ad hoc fashion to meet particular needs and pressures at a particular time and place. Agricultural programs have been in the nature of emergency improvisations to meet crises.

Because the need for a permanent agricultural program never has been accepted, no organized planning process which attempts to diagnose and integrate all needs and interests has been developed. The systematic dismantling of the BAE as a planning agency by the legislative branch and Congressional refusal to permit new formal planning instruments to take the BAE's place in the USDA had popular sanction because of the "unresolved inner conflict" of the middle-group American farmer. This failure to develop a planning process for preparing integrated and balanced agricultural policies has given full play to the centrifugal interest forces in the policy-making process.

The play of these centrifugal forces has tended to create certain distortions in the substantive programs of agriculture. These forces have tended to create imbalances in agricultural programs in terms of: (1) inequitable demands upon the resources of the rest of the economy; (2) regressiveness in the distribution of program benefits among various agricultural classes; and (3) emphasis on the short-term goal of emergency income supplements rather than upon genuine adjustments in production and consumption.

The question now is: How does the farmer's security drive and his attitude toward governmental intervention affect his voting behavior? Does his voting behavior reflect his views in the political process? How does his voting behavior affect the governmental decision-making process?

Thus far, I am sure I have sounded like a complete economic determinist. To a degree, I am an economic determinist. I believe that the economic coercions of his commodity determines a farmer's attitude toward governmental intervention in the production of his commodity. But, at this point in farmer political behavior, economic determinism and I have to part company. The reason is that the farmer who goes to the polls is more than an economic man. If he were not more than that,

the wheat farmer in North Dakota and the cotton farmer in Alabama would be voting the same ticket. The farmer who goes to the polls is a "political man," and consequently his vote is affected by more than economic considerations. Students of political behavior have found that other factors (such as old loyalties to political myths and symbols, family voting traditions, desire for social status in the community) are important determinants of voting patterns. Probably only in severe economic crises can a farmer's voting behavior be explained in terms of economic determinism.

The cash grain, dairy, corn-hog, cattle-feeder farmers of the Upper Mississippi Valley and of the Northern Great Plains areas are traditionally Republican in their voting behavior. Due to the historical coincidence of the Civil War and to the availability of lands in these areas as a result of the Homestead Act, much of this region was peopled by returning veterans of the Grand Army of the Republic. They transmitted their political symbolism to the foreign groups with whom they intermingled. They set the political pattern for the area. Thus, through a historical coincidence, these areas became Republican and continue to vote Republican unless economic coercions become too severe.

Perhaps I should point out here, however, that the midwestern farmer, even in times of prosperity, is not quite as Republican-minded as the election statistics seem to indicate. Many so-called rural precincts include a rural town, which, small as it is, has a main street psychology that gives Republicans a majority in the precinct's election returns. This majority fails to reflect accurately the farm vote. But even when the vote of the rural main street is discounted, the midwestern farmer vote is normally Republican.

Whenever economic conditions are depressed, however, the farmer characteristically has turned to the Democratic Party. The reason is that the Democratic Party is more inclined than is the Republican Party to give the farmer the governmental assistance he seeks: Let us look at a few examples of this "swing pattern" in farmer voting behavior. In 1932, when the parity ratio for wheat had declined to 50, the Republican wheat states were driven into the Democratic ranks. They voted Democratic again in 1936. But in 1938, when the parity ratio under the Democratic administration had dropped from its 1937 high of 91 down to 76, the wheat states returned again into the Republican column.

According to a study (made by the U. S. News and World Report in cooperation with such magazines as Wallaces' Farmer), of farmer voting behavior in 1954, the Republican Party lost heavily in farm votes in Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, where dairy and cash-grain farmers were already feeling the economic pinch. But it lost only moderately in Iowa, where corn-hog producers were not yet feeling enough of an economic squeeze to give up the privilege of voting Republican. In contrast, by 1956, Iowa farmers also were feeling economically hard pressed and they were an important element in electing a Democratic governor and a Democratic Congressman in the 6th District.

The 1956 election is a particularly good illustration of the swing

pattern in farmer voting behavior. Twenty Congressional districts throughout the United States switched parties in the 1956 election. Eleven districts switched into the Democratic column. Six of these eleven switches occurred in the top twenty farm districts in value of farm products sold. Three switches to the Republicans took place in the 263 districts where five percent or more of the population is employed in agriculture. But none of these three switches was in the top 100 farm districts. What makes these farm switches to the Democrats particularly significant is the fact that no switches to the Democrats took place in the 172 districts where less than 5 percent of the population is employed in agriculture. In contrast, the Republicans picked up six seats in these nonfarm districts.

What, then, has been the effect upon agricultural policy development of this swing pattern of farmer voting behavior? Is farmer voting behavior in conflict with commodity interest? The answer to the latter question is a qualified "No," as far as members of the House of Representatives are concerned. Republican Congressmen who are elected from farming areas are under the same commodity compulsions and pressures as Democratic Congressmen would be. The intensity of the economic coercion experienced by the commodity and the economic importance of the commodity to his area generally measure the extent to which a Republican Congressman will deviate from his party's stand on a particular farm policy. Therefore, as long as the Democratic Party is standing in the wings, offering a program of large assistance to the farmers, it cannot usually be said that a farmer is not voting his commodity interest in voting for a Republican Congressman. The threat of a Democratic swing is usually sufficient to keep rural Republican Congressmen "right" on farm issues. However, because of the broader economic base of their constituencies, a Republican president and Republican senators are less coerced by the threat of farmer disaffection.

Some students of politics have cited as an example of irrational political behavior Iowa's election in 1948, which returned 9 Republicans to Congress and at the same time gave its electoral votes to Truman. In actuality, the Iowa farmer was not acting inconsistently in such voting behavior. In fact, because of their emotional loyalty to Republican symbolism, Midwest farmers, without calculated design on their part, have put themselves in a favorable political position where they are offered a sort of "blue plate special" in representation which exactly fits their taste. They can have real tailor-made political representation. They can elect Republican Congressmen who act like Democrats on farm issues, and like Republicans in all other areas.

Of course, the important question which still remains to be answered is: To what extent does farmer thinking and feeling on farm programming and agricultural adjustments break through into the governmental policy-forming process? We all know that the representative process is not merely a mirror which reflects the psychological norms of the various social and economic groupings. It cannot and probably should not be such a mirror. Democracy is based on the proposition

that its elected representatives take leadership in the formulation of wise public policies and in the development of an informed public opinion in support of such policies. Moreover, such factors as the personal predilections of elected representatives, the shadows on the wall which Congressmen sometimes take for reality, the institutional obstacles and internal politics in the governmental process itself, all combine to prevent the legislative process from being merely such a mirror.

Before we can estimate the extent to which farmer views are ignored, magnified, or distorted in the representative process, answers are needed to such questions as: What sort of institutional drives for power, tensions, and conflicts are generated by the workings of our constitutional legislative process? What are the intra-governmental politics of the policy-forming process? What is the role of the party, the commodity group, the farm organization, the "farm bloc," Congress and its committees, the presidency, and the Department of Agriculture and its bureaucracy? How do they interact in the formulation of agricultural policy? How do their interactions affect that policy? Time here does not permit any speculation upon these imponderables. But we do know that despite the fact that farmer views are sometimes ignored, magnified, and distorted in the representative process, the farmer's psychology, his wants, fears, motivations, and aspirations do set limits on what is politically possible in the legislative process. They set the outer bounds within which the governmental decision-making process must formulate its policies for adjustments in the agricultural economy.

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Discussion

I FOUND Professor Parks' paper most interesting to read and, in places, even entertaining.* The amusing transformation that Professor Parks undergoes from a pragmatist to an economic determinist and then to a political determinist is described fluently and expressively. The fact that the two doctrines, pragmatism and determinism, are dialectically opposed to one another gives reason to speculate that he may have been better off remaining a mug-wump.

Seriously, I think we need to consider two points in Professor Parks' paper. The first is his abandonment of an assigned topic and the second is an evaluation of the results of this abandonment.

He says the basic reason for deserting the topic is the impossibility of distinguishing between ends and means. The argument is based upon the pragmatist's questioning of the scientific validity of separating means from ends. A more pragmatic reason for abandoning the topic would seem, at first glance, to be the difficulty of describing the nature of goals. But, even the great pragmatist, John Dewey, did not abandon the notion of ends in his theory of morals. Thus, recourse to the pragmatists appears to be insufficient ground for changing the objective of the paper. Had Professor Parks adopted the pragmatist's view on ends and analyzed the historical goals relating to agriculture in this context, an extremely useful study could have resulted.¹

An evaluation of the methodology of political psychology which is forced upon us by Professor Parks' choice of topics leads me to my second point. I believe he had as much difficulty keeping separated the economic arena from the political platform, as he claimed the pragmatists do in keeping means distinct from ends. I am sure he would agree that the economic arena cannot be kept separate from the political platform, and he realized this when he said, "... we are depicting an oversimplified creature who has no existence in the blooming buzzing confusion of the real world." The confusion of analytical abstractions with concrete entities thus plagues the field of political psychology just as it would if there were a field of economic psychology. The identification

*This first discussion is written by A. N. Halter.

¹Ends, according to Dewey, are those foreseen consequences, which influence present deliberation and which finally bring it to rest by furnishing an adequate stimulus to overt action.

of specific acts as "economic" or "political" is an analytical abstraction that often hampers the validity of analysis. In the first place, such abstraction is likely to result in oversight of factors amenable to specific empirical investigation. In the second place, it increases the possibility of missing interrelationships between the different acts separated by abstraction. I can understand how the methodology of political psychology can deduce what appear to be conflicting results when it is based on the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. I do not believe that the relative newness of the field is the cause of its failure to explain human behavior, for contrary to Professor Parks' statement, the same postulates of political psychology have been with us since Aristotle.

Let me illustrate this from Professor Parks' paper. He says first that the cause of political behavior is a "group feeling of insecurity brought on by a deterioration of the circumstances in which the group lives." Second, groups which are on the bottom of the economic scale live quietly and submissively because there is no feeling of insecurity. Earlier he implied that labor before Gompers was at the bottom of the economic scale. Yet labor did not live quietly and submissively; it engaged in "toe-to-toe slugging in the economic arena." Thus political psychology, as is expected, fails to account for all the stated facts.

Upon reading Professor Parks' paper I was at once struck by his interpretation of the program committee's statement about the importance of studying alternative goals in relation to adjustments in agriculture.* He believes that the committee viewed the study of such goals "merely as a method of gaining an understanding of the social and political obstacles to adjustments in the scale of individual farm operations, in reallocation of resources between agricultural products, and in shifts of labor resources to nonfarm activities." He doubts, however, that an examination of farmer goals can throw much light on obstacles to needed adjustments in agriculture. He believes that a more promising attack is to determine what characterizes the "farmer political mind" and thereby ascertain the limits within which the governmental decision-making process operates to bring about the required changes in agriculture.

My discussion of Professor Parks' paper pertains to the character and role of goals, the examination of which he considers to be so fruitless an undertaking.

I believe the conference outline sets up something that is treated as a final goal or end and declares in a general way what measures are required in order that this end may be realized. In short, it suggests a policy for agriculture, a statement of what had better be done about the present situation of the American farmer. Professor Parks apparently accepts this policy as a "good" one, for he is concerned simply with the question of what obstacles the political attitudes of the farmer put in the way of its enactment.

*This second discussion is written by C. M. Bogholt.

It is significant, however, that when Professor Parks comes to spell out in more detail what comprises the "farmer political mind" he talks about the farmer's motivations, his interests, his values, his wants, his aspirations, and his security drive. I agree with the author in holding suspect the utility of the concept of goals as a tool of analysis. The term "goals" is extremely vague and in some of its usages contains implicitly an entire value theory. But when Professor Parks uses such terms as aspirations, motivations, interests, desires, and security drive (goal?) to characterize a "farmer mind" it is fair, I think, to ask whether he has not let in at the back door what he has been at such pains to usher out at the front door. Professor Parks' terms clearly point to the essence of farmer values, what the farmer prizes and holds dear and what as a consequence of deliberation he decides to do when he is faced with trouble and conflict.

What is the ground, in any event, for treating the "farmer political mind," however characterized, as an obstacle? An obstacle arises here only because somebody has decided — quite apart from the actual purposes and interests of the farmer — what is good as an end and the means thereto. That the farmer's purposes and interests might constitute obstructions to the enactment of a plan so contrived is understandable. What is less understandable is the ground upon which such purposes and interests are excluded from consideration in what is finally determined to be desirable policy.

It appears to me that a view that makes such exclusion plausible must hold that a final end can be determined as good or desirable apart from the means. The end is considered to justify the means. With the effectiveness of the means determined, let us say in the present instance fewer and larger farms, what else can be done with purposes and interests of farmers which are in conflict but to exclude them and treat them as obstacles?

I believe that such a view of the relation of means-ends is erroneous and that a correct view of this relation leads to an alternative conception of the conditions that are required for the formation of adequate policy.