

*The farmer grew up to be independent in thought and in action. But he recognized the value of joining with others to help bring recognition of his problems and betterment of some of his conditions.*

## 26. Farmers' Organizations

LOUIS BERNARD SCHMIDT, *History*

FARMERS' ORGANIZATIONS MAY BE DIVIDED INTO TWO groups: first, those that are designed to promote the special interests of the farming population; and, second, those that seek to unite farmers as a class in the crusade for economic and social justice. The first group includes farmers' elevator companies, the co-operative creamery associations, and the fruit growers' unions. The second group may further be divided into nonpartisan organizations represented by the Grange, American Farm Bureau Federation, and Farmers' Union; and political third-party organizations represented by the Greenback, Populist, and Farmer-Labor movements.

Both major groups may be identified as private organizations based on voluntary effort as distinguished from public organizations implementing state action, such as the United States Department of Agriculture and the Land-Grant College. This chapter is concerned with the organizations that endeavor to unite the farmers as a class in the pursuit of their common aims.

### EARLY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES AND FAIRS

The earliest organization of farmers in the United States was the agricultural society which began with the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of Agriculture in 1785 of which George Washington was one of the founders. The agricultural society was the predominant form of association among the farmers during the middle Nineteenth Century. A rapidly-expanding economy was accompanied by a rapidly-expanding social organization. Agricultural societies were organized in nearly every county of the nation. In 1858 the United States Patent Office listed seventy-four in Iowa. These societies—township, county, and district—were the prelude to the organization of the state agricultural societies which underwent the transition from

private to semi-public and then to public organizations under the name of the State Department of Agriculture. The Iowa State Agricultural Society was organized in 1853 and transformed into the Department of Agriculture in 1900.

The agricultural fair was the institutionalized expression of the agricultural society, both educationally and recreationally. It was the chief agency of the society in the diffusion of new ideas, the introduction of better farming practices, new types of livestock, grains, and fruits, and the development of social unity. The first state fair of Iowa was held at Fairfield, October 25-27, 1854, and annually thereafter in different sections of the state until 1879 when it was established permanently in Des Moines. Evening meetings were held for discussions and formal addresses were given by prominent men invited for the occasion. Newspapers gave full accounts of the fair and annual reports were published.

This period also marks the beginning of concerted movements of farmers with declarations of grievances and proposed remedies that were interrupted by the Civil War, only to be revived and intensified as the nation entered upon an era of economic, political, and social reconstruction. This is the era of the great national farm organizations that constitute the farmers' movement in their crusade for economic and social justice.

The economic ills of the farmer were laid at the doors of the legislature and Congress. The farmer complained that he was not adequately represented in the law-making bodies, which he charged were controlled by the corporations and whose legislation favored the railroads. To remedy this situation the farmer felt he must express himself politically, and to do this effectively he organized. The formation of nonpartisan organizations and political third-parties enabled the farmer by group action to exert pressure on the major parties and in time to translate his demands into remedial legislation.

The environmental conditions that gave rise to agrarian discontent were supplemented by another factor inherent in the farmers' movement: the psychology of the farmer. The farmer is an individualist. His extreme individualism is the outgrowth of his pioneering experience, the soil in which independence of thought and action were nurtured. Only when environmental conditions bore down heavily upon him was he ready to join any organization that gave fiery utterance to his grievances and proposed remedies for his economic and social ills. But the extreme individualism of the farmer also explains a lack of social consciousness based on real class sympathy. It has

served as a barrier to the promotion of the solidarity of the farmers as a class.

#### THE GRANGER MOVEMENT AND THE ANTI-MONOPOLY PARTY

The first stage of the farmers' movement against the new industrialism threatening the foundations of pioneer agrarian democracy was the Grange or Patrons of Husbandry, founded in 1867 by O. H. Kelley and six associates in the United States Department of Agriculture. The Grange was a secret fraternal society, open to both men and women, for the promotion of social exchange of ideas and the educational advancement. Provision was made for the organization of local granges, state granges, and a National Grange. Regarded at first with suspicion, the farmers joined it in large numbers in the depression of the seventies.

The first Grange in Iowa was organized at Newton on May 2, 1868, and the second at Postville in October, 1869. The Iowa State Grange was established January 12, 1871, with Dudley W. Adams as its first State Master. The next three years witnessed rapid growth which swept the country, reaching the high tide by January, 1875, with 21,696 local granges composed of 858,050 members representing thirty-two states and territories. The Midwest was the center of agricultural discontent and the stronghold of the Granger movement. Missouri led with 2,009 local granges; Indiana came next with 2,000; and Iowa third with 1,891. These three states alone had more than one-fourth of the local granges reported for the United States in 1875.

The general program of the National Grange was set forth in the following "Declaration of Purposes" adopted at the seventh annual meeting held in St. Louis in 1874:

We shall endeavor . . . to enhance the comforts and attractions of our homes, and strengthen our attachment to our pursuits; to foster co-operation . . . to diversify our crops; to discountenance of the credit system, the mortgage system, the fashion system and every other system tending to prodigality and bankruptcy. We propose meeting together, buying together, selling together. We wage no aggressive warfare against any other interest whatever. . . We hold that transportation companies are necessary to our success, that their interests are intimately connected with our interests, and that harmonious action is mutually advantageous. *We are not enemies of the railroads.* In our noble order there is no communism, no agrarianism; we emphatically assert that the truth is taught in our organic law and that the Grange is not a political or party organization. No Grange, if true to its obligations, can discuss political or religious questions, nor call conventions, nor nominate candidates, nor even discuss their merits in its meetings.

The Grange was nominally a nonpolitical organization but it opened the way for the independent farmers' parties—the Anti-Monop-

oly and Greenback parties—that were organized in eleven western states, some of which won elections through fusion with the minority party.

#### THE RAILROAD QUESTION

The most significant aspect of the Granger movement in the Midwest was the railroad question which commanded more attention than any other issue. The rapid expansion of agriculture into the prairie states and the high war prices of wheat and corn were followed in the late sixties and early seventies by falling prices which were blamed on the railroads, the bankers, and the middlemen. When wheat dropped to fifty cents and corn to fifteen cents a bushel on the farm and sold again for four or five times the farm price, the farmers complained that "something was wrong" with the distribution system. The railroads, which bore the brunt of Granger protest, were charged with unfair treatment in the transportation of farm products and of discriminations between persons and shipping points. To eliminate these abuses and compel the railroads to observe the principle of fair and equal treatment of their patrons, the Grangers adopted the policy of state regulation through legislation, contending that the railroads were quasi-public corporations and as such were subject to public control. This was the real issue behind the Anti-Monopoly and Granger movements in Iowa: "the right of the state to regulate rates in the interest of the people."

The Republican party which was in control of the state government ignored this demand while the Democratic party was hopelessly in the minority; consequently the farmers inaugurated a movement for the organization of a new political party. This was the Anti-Monopoly party which was formed in the panic year of 1873. It conducted a vigorous campaign and elected ten of the fifty senators and forty-nine of the one hundred representatives to the legislature. Governor Carpenter was re-elected by a reduced majority. The fact that he was an active Granger pledged to support railroad regulation probably saved the Republican party from defeat.

The fourth annual meeting of the State Grange, which was held in Des Moines the following December, devoted its attention largely to the transportation problem. It was attended by 309 delegates representing eighty-eight counties. The pressure the organized farmers brought to bear on the next Iowa General Assembly through this body and their elected representatives in the legislature resulted in the enactment of the Iowa Railroad Law of 1874. This provided for the

establishment of an official classification and the fixing of maximum rates. This legislation was repealed in 1878 and new legislation was enacted. Governor Larrabee later gave appraisal of this legislation in his book on *The Railroad Question*, in which he concluded that:

The Granger laws have been and are still severely criticized by those opposed to the principles of state control and by the ignorant. It is nevertheless true that those laws were moderate, just and reasonably well-adapted to remedy the evils of which the public complained. . . The Iowa law was imperfect in detail and yet its enactment proved one of the greatest legislative achievements in the history of the state. It demonstrated to the people their ability to correct by earnestness and perseverance the most far-reaching public abuses and led to an emphatic judicial declaration of the common-law principle that railroads are highways and as such are subject to any legislative control which may be deemed necessary for the public welfare.

The economic feature of the Granger Anti-Monopoly movement was co-operative buying and selling designed to eliminate the exorbitant profits of the middlemen. It included local, county, and state agencies for the sale of farm products and the purchase of implements and supplies, local grain elevators, co-operative stores, banking, insurance, and even the manufacture of farm machinery. These co-operative ventures were all best developed in Iowa. One-third of the grain elevators and warehouses in the state were owned or controlled by the Grange. Large shipments of grain, hogs, and cattle were shipped direct to Chicago through Grange agents at a saving of from 10 to 40 per cent. The state agency established at Des Moines in 1872 handled two hundred thousand dollars worth of machinery during the following year, reduced the cost of farm supplies, and realized large profits by direct shipments of grain and livestock to Chicago. Co-operative stores were established, some on the Rochdale plan. Farmers' mutual fire insurance companies were organized.

The Grange also ventured into the manufacture of farm implements and machinery, the most important attempts in this form of co-operative enterprise being undertaken by the Iowa Grange. The patent for the Werner harvester was purchased and Grange factories were established. Two hundred thirty-four machines were manufactured and sold to Iowa farmers in 1874; but the State Grange became involved in disputes with the Marsh Harvester Company for infringement on patents and the venture resulted in loss and failure. Patents on other implements and machines were bought and factories established for the manufacture of plows, seeders, cultivators, mowers, corn shellers, and the like.

These co-operative efforts in Iowa and other Midwest states saved

the farmers millions of dollars. It was claimed that they saved the Grangers twelve million dollars in one year; but they disappeared as quickly as they came, except for the farmers' mutual fire insurance companies and the co-operative creamery associations, which were more successful than the more ambitious farm implement factories.

The failure of the business ventures may be attributed to the fact that the Grangers attempted to organize them on the co-operative plan, thus creating large business enterprises requiring experience. They tended to place too much emphasis on immediate financial savings and returns and too little on expert and well-paid management. They were unable to compete with established business concerns. They were impatient of results. Suspicion, jealousy, and factionalism invaded their ranks. These factors and improvement in economic conditions were reflected in a rapid decline of the Grange which almost reached the vanishing point in Iowa—from the peak of 1,999 in 1874, to 1,018 in 1876, and a mere 8 in 1885. The Grange, returning to the original purpose of its founders as a social and educational organization, began a gradual recovery which it has maintained to the present while other organizations have appeared to command the allegiance of the farmer in his crusade for economic and social justice.

#### THE GREENBACK PARTY

The Greenback party in Iowa was the successor of the Anti-Monopoly party of the Granger period and the forerunner of the Populist party of the nineties. The continuance of general dissatisfaction with existing conditions led to the demand that the United States Government increase the circulating mediums needed by a rapidly-expanding rural economy. This demand became known as the Greenback movement, culminating in the formation of the Greenback party which gave attention to other issues besides the money question. The Iowa Greenback party was organized in Des Moines on May 10, 1876, which was the year of the lowest yield per acre of wheat in the history of the state. These were indeed the years of lowest prices and the greatest agricultural depression which, it may be observed, were also the years of the greatest strength of the Greenback party.

The state and national platforms of the Greenback party were devoted largely to general issues: "the three monopolies of money, land, and transportation." The monetary reforms demanded were the abolition of national banks, and the issue of legal tender paper by the government, the unlimited coinage of silver, the payment of the

interest-paying national debt as soon as possible, the payment of "the same money to the bondholder as to the plowholder," and government loans to "kill the mortgage business." Land monopoly was opposed by the declaration that the public lands should not be granted to railroads and other corporations or sold to speculators, but should be donated to actual settlers. On transportation the Greenback party demanded the repeal of the law of 1878 substituting a railroad commission for laws governing freight rates. The Iowa Greenback party also endorsed the national platform demanding a graduated income tax and direct election of President, Vice-President, and United States senators, and it supported universal suffrage.

The Iowa Greenback party was recruited largely from the ranks of the Republican party which was divided on major issues, although it received substantial support from the Democrats who composed the minority party. Among the more prominent leaders of the party may be mentioned L. Q. Hoggatt, of Ames, L. H. ("Calamity") Weller, E. H. ("Heifer-calf") Gillette, and James B. ("Jumping Jim") Weaver. The party achieved some conspicuous successes. In 1878, it elected Weaver and Gillette to Congress. Its greatest strength was registered in 1879 when its candidate for governor received over 15 per cent of the total votes cast. At the same time the party elected two state senators and five representatives. Thereafter, the Greenback party declined. In 1880 Weaver was nominated for President and in 1883 for governor, receiving in both instances an Iowa vote less than that cast for governor in 1879. In 1884 and again in 1886 he was elected to Congress by fusion with the Democrats. The decline of the party was now hastened by "factional wrangles and jealousies, lack of finances, and some tendency on the part of its leaders to exploit the rank and file." Prohibition proved to be somewhat of a dilemma to the party and fusion with the Democrats created further division. In 1889, the Democratic party elected its first governor since the Civil War. "Under the specious and seductive plea, 'Get your reforms inside the old parties,' the Greenback movement was stilettoed and put in its grave."

#### THE FARMERS' ALLIANCE

The Farmers' Alliance movement was the outgrowth of clubs that had grown up for various reasons alongside the Grange of the seventies. In time these clubs were formed into state alliances which in turn were united into two great alliances: one, the National Farmers' Alliance originating in Illinois in 1880 and commonly known as the

"Northern" or "Northwestern" Alliance; the other, the National Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union which was started in Texas as early as 1875 and usually is referred to as the "Southern" Alliance. These two organizations attempted to effect a merger at conventions held in St. Louis in 1889, but the cleavage in the Farmers' Alliance movement on sectional lines prevented the merger. The programs of the Northern and Southern Alliances, however, were quite similar. Their general purpose was to unite the farmers for agricultural advancement and protection "against class legislation, monopoly, and swindling."

The Iowa Farmers' Alliance was organized in Des Moines, January 12, 1881, and immediately become affiliated with the Northern Alliance. The Southern Alliance did not gain entry into Iowa until 1891 when the Alliance movement gave way to Populism. The Alliance movement spread rapidly in Iowa, serving in part as a business agent for the farmer but devoting more attention to politics and legislation, on which it exerted considerable influence. The Iowa Alliance was officially connected with the Farmers' Protective Association organized in Des Moines in April, 1881, for the purpose of fighting the barbed wire trust. The Association established a factory in Des Moines to manufacture wire for sale at reasonable prices and when it began selling wire to the farmers for seven and one-half cents a pound it became involved in patent suits with the trust. The attorney for the Association was A. B. Cummins, who carried on a legal contest with the trust for five years. The general price of wire was finally reduced.

The Iowa Alliance also promoted the organization of farmers' mutual fire and tornado insurance companies inaugurated by the Grange. The rapid growth of these companies is attested by the fact that in 1889 there were 116 farmers' mutual fire and tornado insurance companies in Iowa. The Iowa Alliance also gave some attention to the organization of farmers' co-operative elevators and co-operative stores that were established in the eighties. But it was through political and legislative measures that the Iowa Farmers' Alliance in concert with the Anti-Monopoly and Greenback parties sought to remedy the ills of the farmers.

The Iowa Alliance had been growing steadily in political strength and influence since its inception in 1881, but it was during the latter part of the decade that it grew "with astonishing rapidity." One hundred forty delegates representing forty counties attended the annual state meeting in 1887. By 1890, county alliances had been established in fifty-two of the ninety-nine counties. More than seven-



teen hundred local alliances had been formed, with an estimated fifty thousand members. The number of local granges in Iowa meanwhile had dropped to fifty-two. While the Iowa Alliance did not champion the formation of a third party, fearful that this would lead to internal dissension and destruction of the order, it nevertheless tended to disregard party regularity and to threaten the continued ascendancy of the Republican party. It has been noted that the independent movement in politics continued to grow in various forms under a continuity of leadership from 1872 to 1890.

The Alliance became active politically in supporting the general demand of the farmers for both state and federal regulation of railroads. It continued the agitation of the railroad question in the state elections of 1885 and again in 1887 when both the Republican and Democratic parties inserted planks in their platforms supporting state regulation of railroads. The result was that the railroad forces were defeated by the election of a legislature which attacked the transportation problem under the leadership of Governor Larrabee (1886-1890). Under the pressure exerted by the Alliance and despite the opposition of the railroad lobby, a law was enacted in 1888 which provided for an elective commission with power to investigate the transportation question, to make freight classifications, to prepare schedules of "reasonable maximum rates," and to institute prosecutions for extortion. Rates fixed by the commission were subject to review by the courts. Discrimination between shippers, places, and kinds of traffic were prohibited and freight pools were forbidden. The law went into effect in 1889 and local freight rates were materially reduced.

Other remedial legislation demanded and secured by the Iowa Farmers' Alliance in 1888 included: "the prohibition of combinations fixing the price of oil, lumber, coal, grain, flour, provisions, or any other commodity"; the imposition of heavy penalties for selling grain and seed under fraudulent names; and the requirement that any article containing "any ingredient but the pure fat of healthy swine" and sold for use as lard must be labelled "compound lard." In 1890 the Iowa Alliance secured the enactment of a law reducing the legal interest rate from 10 to 8 per cent; it demanded the election of Larrabee to the United States Senate to succeed Allison; and it urged that more emphasis be placed on practical and experimental agriculture in the training of farmers at the Iowa Agricultural College.

In national affairs the Iowa Alliance urged the passage of the butter and oleomargarine bill, defining butter and imposing a tax

regulating the manufacture, sale, importation, and exportation of oleomargarine. This was enacted into law on July 20, 1886. Senators Allison and Wilson of Iowa voted for the measure. The vote in Congress was divided sharply on sectional lines, the Northern representatives supporting the dairy interests while the Southern representatives supported the cottonseed oil interests. This division is of significance in explaining the cleavage in the Farmers' Alliance and also in later and more recent phases of the butter versus oleomargarine controversy.

The Iowa Alliance demanded federal regulation of railroads by the passage of the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 and the elevation of the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture to cabinet rank in 1889. It championed the Sherman Anti-trust Act of 1890. It favored the free coinage of silver, eventual government ownership of railway, telegraph and telephone lines, and the popular election of United States senators.

In the advocacy of state and national legislative reforms the Iowa Farmers' Alliance maintained a nonpartisan attitude on the assumption that the major parties could serve the interests of the farmers better than an independent farmers' party which would wreck rather than strengthen the Alliance. It was apparent by 1890, however, that an independent party spirit was rising in both the Northern and Southern alliances and the Iowa Alliance was no exception. Rural factions were developed favoring and opposing an independent party. The *Iowa Homestead*, owned by J. M. Pierce with Henry Wallace as editor, opposed the organization of the Alliance into a third party—urging that it could accomplish more through the major parties than by the third party method; while the *Iowa Tribune*, which became the *Iowa Farmers' Tribune*, controlled by Weaver and Gillette, championed the independent movement. In 1891 the Iowa Farmers' Alliance (Northern) was incorporated. In that year the Southern Alliance entered the state. Factionalism and rivalry were intensified. The question that gave the alliance leaders great concern was the extent to which the farmers would support an independent political party.

#### THE POPULIST PARTY

The Populist, or People's, party was a continuation of the independent party movements that have so far been considered in this chapter. More directly, it was the outgrowth of the Farmers' Alliance. It was "a movement against plutocracy; against accumulations and

combinations of capital; against the control of the country by moneyed monopolies." It was promoted by hard times, discontent, and dissatisfaction. It was prompted by the conviction that unjust burdens were being imposed upon the southern and western farmers; that wealth was being drained from the West and concentrated in the East. The economic evils of which the farmers complained were related to the three great monopolies of transportation, land, and money. These were the grievances that led the Farmers' Alliance in the South and West into politics and the organization of an independent political party under the name of the People's party.

The Iowa State Farmers' Alliance began to manifest tendencies toward independent political action in the elections of 1890. Local alliances were becoming unusually active with attention centered on national issues. The *Iowa State Register*, the leading Republican newspaper, emphasized the differences between the two Alliances, commending the Northern Alliance for its nonpartisan policy and assailing the Southern Alliance for coming into the state with its third party heresy. The *Iowa Homestead* denounced the Southern Alliance for its opposition to the Conger lard bill taxing the manufacture and sale of compound lard. The *Farmers' Tribune* became the official spokesman of the Southern Alliance with the declaration that it endorsed "that political organization which supports the Alliance principles and *no* others." This paper, a consolidation of four other papers, claimed a circulation of 11,520 which compared favorably with the Homestead's estimated circulation of 15,000. Under these conditions the People's party in Iowa was launched in 1891.

The Farmers' Alliance movement for an independent farmers' party culminated in a public call for a conference which met in Cincinnati in May, 1891, and adopted a resolution favoring the formation of the "People's Party of the United States." Pursuant to this action, which was supported by the Iowa delegation headed by Weaver and Gillette, a "People's Independent State Convention," composed of delegates from sixty counties, was held in Des Moines on June 3, 1891. This convention adopted the platform of the Cincinnati conference and nominated A. G. Westfall for governor. The state platform denounced the "moneyed oligarchy" and class legislation, and it supported the eight-hour day for miners. It demanded an increase in tax assessments for railroads, the two-cent fare, the taxation of mortgages, a uniform schoolbook system, and the Australian ballot. It avoided commitment on the liquor question, which was a leading issue between major parties. The Democratic platform was more

responsive to agrarian demands. The election turned largely on local issues. The entire Democratic ticket was elected, Governor Boies receiving a margin of more than eight thousand votes over his Republican opponent. Westfall on the Populist ticket received 12,303 of the 420,212 votes cast for governor. The Populists, drawing more supporters from the ranks of the Republican party, held the balance of power in favor of the Democratic party. They elected one senator and one representative in the General Assembly.

Political interest was now centered on the national elections of 1892. Iowa had two presidential possibilities: Governor Boies, a rival of Ex-President Cleveland for the Democratic nomination, and General Weaver, the chief spokesman of the Populist party. Party relations were becoming more fluid as indicated by tendencies of Republicans to leave their party and support the more progressive policies of the Democratic and independent or third parties. Weaver was nominated for President at the Omaha convention. In the general election, Weaver received 20,596 votes. This was less than 5 per cent of the total vote cast and less than two-thirds of the vote he received as the Greenback candidate for President in 1880. Weaver gained in the country at large, but he lost strength in Iowa while other candidates on the ticket received about the same percentages of the votes cast.

The financial crisis of 1893 brought monetary issues to the forefront during the next three years. The Populists were by no means alone in attributing the crisis to a lack of money and in demanding the free coinage of silver and more money as a solution of the difficulty. The hope of the Populists was to unite the dissatisfied elements of both parties into a political party committed to monetary and other reforms; but this hope was based more on "feelings of dissatisfaction and unfairness" than on "conditions of distress or calamity." The chief factors that tended to moderate the unrest were the hog and dairy cow. It was largely because of reasonably sure crops and the diversification of farming that the third party movement failed to make appreciable gains in Iowa. There was, however, a fringe of distress in the southern and western parts of the state during the drouth and labor troubles of 1894, which was reflected in the general election. The Republican party was developing solidarity while the Democratic party was threatened with division between the conservatives and the elements seeking fusion with the Populists, who immediately began making preparations for the national campaign of 1896. Monetary issues were pushed to the front. There was talk of Democratic-Populist fusion which was opposed by the conservative Democrats

and radical Populists. Weaver summed up the situation by the observation that the one difference of opinion within the Populists party related to "the method of securing a union of reform elements in 1896."

Any appraisal of the Populist party in Iowa must be measured not by its numerical strength in the general elections—which was negligible—but by its influence on the major parties. It held a potential balance of power that was a constant threat to the major parties. This was "due further to the fact that economic grievances of Iowa farmers were not a Populist monopoly and to the fears of the orthodox that the farmers might swell the ranks of the third party instead of trusting for results at the hands of the old parties." It may therefore be said that as a sign and a fringe of the larger current of unrest, the Populist party thus served as a sort of alarm signal to strengthen the left-wing elements of the major parties. This influence was more or less permanent, for as the Populist party dissolved, it furnished recruits to the left wings of the old parties. It centered its attention on national issues to the neglect of state issues. Viewed in broad historical perspective, the significance of the Populist party is attested by the fact that nearly all of the planks of the Omaha platform were enacted into law within a generation. It was, moreover, a political educator of the farmer.

#### THE GRANGE REVIVED

The phenomenal rise and growth of the Iowa State Grange to great power and influence and its rapid decline to almost the vanishing point from 1868 to 1885 have been reviewed in a preceding section of this chapter. Thereafter the Grange maintained a continuing, though somewhat precarious existence to 1907 when it began a gradual recovery in membership and activity. The leaders of the Grange determined to perpetuate the order. Mindful of the failure of its co-operative business ventures which precipitated its decline, the Grange returned to the original purpose of the founders: the development of its educational, social, and legislative functions. It should be remembered that the Grange was overshadowed during the eighties and early nineties by the Farmers' Alliance and the Populist party, which the embattled farmers joined in their demands for economic and social reforms. Grange libraries were established. The Grange advocated the teaching of agriculture in the primary schools of the state, a reading course for farmers, and the appointment of "Tama Jim" Wilson as Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Grange became an active champion of the good roads movement, a permanent state highway commission, and federal and state aid for building roads. It recommended a law insuring to the tenant compensation for increased value of the farm or in the soil due to the management of the tenant, the guarantee of bank deposits, a state income tax and the reduction of the legal rate of interest to 6 per cent. The Iowa Grange further supported the principles of the McNary-Haugen bill and the export debenture plan for the disposal of surplus crops in the twenties, and the farm legislative program; but it has opposed the reciprocal agreements. It advocated the exemption from taxation of homesteads to the value of \$2,500. It contributed to the World War II effort by giving full support to the production of foods and fibers for the nation and our allies, and many of its members served on war bond, Red Cross, U.S.O. and other patriotic committees. Since the war, the Grange has opposed any decrease in the tax rate until the national debt has been materially reduced; and it has warned the farmers against the dangers of inflation of farm land values. It has favored legislation for the reorganization of the school districts with state aid and "an equalization program for financing our public schools."

#### THE FARMERS' UNION

The Farmers' Education and Co-operative Union, generally known as the National Farmers' Union, was founded at Point, Texas, in 1902 by Newt Gresham and others who had been organizers and leaders of the Farmers' Alliance. It grew rapidly at first, declined during World War I, and then expanded with the great depression in agriculture. In 1940, it represented a membership of one hundred thousand farm families in forty states.

The Farmers' Union constitutes the left wing of agrarian politics. While militantly active politically in demanding legislation to improve the economic and social status of the lower-income class of farmers, it endeavors to bring this about primarily by developing co-operatives and credit associations. It maintains that the economic structure of society must be fundamentally changed—that farmers must go into business and retain all the profits. Accordingly, the Union is interested in promoting co-operatives including the purchase of supplies, the sale of farm products, the conduct of fire, livestock, and life insurance companies, and the management of plants for processing farm products: packing plants, flour mills, phosphate plants, pickle factories, creameries, and canneries. Approximately three hundred thousand farmers

are members of the Union's co-operative associations. Membership is limited to farm owners and tenants, country school teachers, physicians, ministers, and newspaper editors.

The Iowa Farmers' Union was chartered October 8, 1917. It grew rapidly in the twenties, declined in the thirties, recovered again by 1945 with a membership of about 7,100. This does not include the nonmember farm families that are patrons of the Union's co-operatives.

The Iowa Farmers' Union has not taken much interest in state legislation. Its program is that of the National Farmers' Union of which it is a division. This program emphasizes particularly as its main objective, the preservation of the family-sized farm, the protection of which "should be a constant and primary policy and aim in the formulation, amendment, and administration of all farm legislation." It demands an adequate and effective legislation for the development of co-operatives owned by producers and consumers, as the only means by which the potential abundance of the nation may be made available to all the people and by which true democracy may be maintained and safeguarded. It urges the adoption by Congress of a federal program of rural education supported by an annual appropriation of one billion dollars, and the enactment of further legislation providing for a complete revision and integration of "all educational agencies now serving agriculture." It charges that present-day legislation and technology tend to exalt the "dominance of those already on top"—the upper income bracket of farmers—and it frankly declares itself the champion of the lower income bracket of marginal farmers who constitute its membership.

#### THE FARM BUREAU

The formation of the Farm Bureau is closely associated with the development of the county agent system which originated in the first decade of the century. This system came to assume primarily the function of bringing to the farmers the results of agricultural research carried on by the land-grant colleges, the state agricultural experiment stations, and the United States Department of Agriculture. It assumed its present administrative form by the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914. This provided federal grants to the state extension services under the supervision of the land-grant colleges, which in turn made arrangements with the county authorities to employ county agricultural agents. The costs of the system thus came to be borne by federal, state, and county funds. In order to reach the farmers more effectively with scientific and practical instruction, voluntary

associations of farmers were formed—composed chiefly of farmers who were interested in improving their farming practices and who welcomed the help of scientifically-trained men. This form of association came to be called the Farm Bureau, which was originally designed merely as an agency to facilitate the work of the county agent. Both operating units spread rapidly during World War I. Meanwhile the Farm Bureaus began to assume new functions which gave them a wide sweep over agricultural interests. A number of state federations were formed. This movement led to the organization of the American Farm Bureau Federation at Chicago in 1919, and the adoption of a comprehensive program—educational, legislative, and economic—which was designed:

To develop, strengthen, and correlate the work of the state Farm Bureau Federations of the nation, to encourage and promote co-operation of all representative agricultural organizations in every effort to improve facilities and conditions for the economic production, conservation, marketing, transportation, and distribution of farm products; to further the study and enactment of constructive agricultural legislation; to advise with representatives of the public agricultural institutions co-operation with Farm Bureaus in the determination of nationwide policies and to inform Farm Bureau members regarding all movements that affect their interests.

The Federation immediately achieved political significance with the collapse of farm prices in 1920–21 and the coming on of the great depression in agriculture when it established a permanent lobby in Washington for the promotion of a comprehensive program of legislation.

The membership of the American Farm Bureau Federation has fluctuated from the high point of 466,421 in 1921 to a low of 163,246 in 1933. Since then, its growth has been steady and impressive with a membership of 444,485 in 1940 which was increased to 946,136 in 1945. Representing in the main the more prosperous farmers with an upper-class orientation, it has maintained close relationship with the land-grant colleges through the agricultural extension service; it has promoted co-operative marketing and the 4-H Club movement; and it has vigorously championed the farm legislative program of the thirties, the reciprocal trade agreements, and the United Nations' Organization.

The Iowa Farm Bureau Federation is one of the strongest state federations in the Union. Its origin and growth followed the general line of development outlined above. The first county agent in Iowa was employed by Clinton County in 1912. The county agent system was extended and Farm Bureaus were rapidly organized during World War I. By 1918 every county in Iowa had a county agent and a



County Farm Bureau with an average of two hundred members. In that year delegates from a large majority of the counties met in conference at Marshalltown and organized the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation. Its first president was James R. Howard, who also became the first president of the national federation. Membership rose to 109,543 in 1920. Thereafter it gradually declined to the low figure of 18,041 in 1933, then it increased year by year to 54,122 in 1942 and 103,699 in 1946, nearly reaching the figure for 1920.

The work of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation has been departmentalized by the establishment of standing committees through which it has developed its action programs. The scope of its activities since 1933 is indicated in part by the committees on organization, service, legislation, marketing, transportation, rural electrification, soil conservation and production adjustment, taxation, auditing and budget, education, insurance, rural credit and banking, and constitutional amendments. The Iowa Federation has continuously extended its fields of interest until there is hardly a phase of American life affecting the farmer directly or indirectly that has not enlisted its attention.