

# 11

## Goals and Values in American Agriculture: The Protestant Program

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HENRY A. McCANNA<sup>1</sup>

### I. ETHICAL GOALS FOR AGRICULTURAL POLICY

**A** CHRISTIAN ETHICAL APPROACH to agriculture begins with the acknowledgment that "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. . . ." God, the Creator, has given man a special position in the world, with a specific responsibility for the fruits of the earth and towards all living things. This is the stewardship of the earth's resources for the nourishment and the enrichment of human life. Thus the production of food and fiber — the primary task of farmers — becomes a service to God and man.

In the light of basic Christian concepts, the National Council of Churches affirms certain major goals of agricultural policy and commends them to the churches and to the consciences of Christian men and women.

#### A. Opportunity for the Full and Wholesome Development of Persons

General farm organizations, farmer cooperatives and government should be encouraged to develop programs which will enlarge the opportunities for low-income farm families to earn adequate incomes and achieve satisfactory levels of living, either on or off the farm, as the sound basis for wholesome personality growth.

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<sup>1</sup>Executive Director, Division of Home Missions, National Council on the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

**B. Preservation of the Integrity of the  
Farm Family and the Enrichment  
of Rural Family Life**

Preservation and extension of the efficient family-type farm as the predominant pattern of American agriculture should be a conscious goal of our national policy.

**C. The Encouragement of Voluntary Association,  
Cooperation and Mutual Aid  
Among Farm People**

The churches should encourage full membership participation in such organizations of mutual aid and cooperation as a genuine contribution to both Christian and democratic ideals for society.

**D. Conservation of Nature's Resources and  
their Development for the Legitimate  
Uses of Mankind**

The churches must help all people to see that each of us owes a portion of the cost of conserving the nations' soil fertility.

**E. Adequate and Healthful Diets for the  
World's Growing Populations**

Within sound conservation practices and in the light of real national and world need, sustained and realistic abundance in agricultural production should be encouraged.

**F. Fair and Reasonably Stable Levels of Income  
for Farm Producers**

Justice demands that farmers who produce efficiently and abundantly, where such production is in the national interest, should not suffer from this fact but should receive economic rewards comparable with those received by persons of similar competence in other vocations.

### G. Recognition of Human Interdependence on a National and World Scale

Programs which seek to advance the interests of agriculture to the detriment of other groups or other nations should be shunned.

## II. ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE INTERNATIONAL AGE OF AGRICULTURE

God's concern for the needs of all his children for nourishment, both for body and soul, is revealed in his act of creation and in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord made perfectly clear that man's duty to God includes the production and sharing of the material necessities of life. He described the conditions of salvation at the ultimate judgment to include the fact that we did — or did not — "feed the hungry and clothe the naked."

In today's world the gap is wide, and in some areas widening, between the need for food and available food supplies. A large proportion of the world's population still lives in malnutrition and hunger. A few nations enjoy plenty; with us, agricultural surpluses are a continuing problem. Such nations have achieved a major breakthrough in agricultural technology.

In fact, so great has been the advance in the science of agriculture and in the potential for producing reasonable food supplies for all people that the era now emerging and in prospect has been characterized as the international age of agriculture.

The major challenge of this age is to devise ways to make available to the areas of greatest need both surpluses of food now being produced and the knowledge of how to increase the production of food from their own fields. Growing populations present a further problem and, even with our present rate of technological advance, it cannot be taken for granted that we can continuously feed the growing population of the future.

### A. Sharing Our Food Supplies

We welcome the fact that a broader idea of surplus utilization is now being put forward by responsible national leaders under concepts of "Food for Peace." The main focus is not on reduction of our stockpiles and storage bill but on the need of permanent freedom from hunger here and elsewhere.

### B. Sharing Technological Knowledge and Experience

We have the opportunity and responsibility to share with others the skills and knowledge which have been so important in the development of our own agriculture. We commend the progress that has been made through both government and privately supported programs of technical assistance. The churches have a responsibility to assure continuance of the notable contribution of their missionaries. We believe more should be trained in agriculture and home economics.

### C. Sharing Economic Aid for Agriculture and Food Production

Peoples in the early stages of economic development desperately need capital resources. The gap between this need and the capital resources available from government and private foreign investments is still wide.

In supporting enlarged programs of economic aid to underdeveloped countries by this country and the United Nations, church people, with their deep concern for relief of hunger, should stress the need for special attention to projects which directly promote food production and distribution.

### D. Role of Religious and Other Voluntary Organizations

The National Council of Churches and its predecessors have consistently pressed concern for economic development and raising the levels of life of people around the world. Especially through its Departments of International Affairs and the Church and Economic Life, the churches have conducted major campaigns of education and action, have set forth policies, have represented the concerns of the churches to the United Nations and the United States government, and have stimulated both corporate and individual Christian responsibility in relation to humanities' problems of hunger and need. Our Christian faith, our experience in this field and the desperate plight of most of mankind all impel us to continuing and more effective efforts in these concerns.

The National Council of Churches also, through Church World Service, has cooperated with other nongovernmental organizations

in the distribution of food to persons in need throughout the world. These agencies and their overseas affiliates carry on programs for distribution of relief supplies (including food furnished through the United States government under Public Law 480) and technical assistance in over 100 countries. A recent report to the President with reference to the food distribution phase of P.L. 480 stated that "seventy-five million American people support this program through their gifts, their work and their membership in these voluntary organizations." In spite of many complex problems involved, experience has demonstrated both the economic effectiveness and the humanitarian value of this program through voluntary agencies. It should continue to receive the generous support of churches and church people.

#### E. A Major Global Program

Also commended for support by governments and people of every nation is the world-wide, five-year Freedom-from-Hunger Campaign by the U.N. specialized agency, the Food and Agriculture Organization.

In both purpose and scope this program is commended to our churches and their members. It received the endorsement of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in August 1960. Our churches and church people can contribute tangibly to this constructive effort by informing themselves of the specific needs and objectives of the campaign; encouraging our government to increase its support of the FAO and projects related to its Freedom-from-Hunger campaign; and giving generously to Church World Service so that it with other religious agencies may support projects of self-help and development encompassed by this world-wide program.

### III. NATIONAL GOALS FOR THE FIFTH DECADE OF THE MIGRANT MINISTRY

The Migrant Ministry of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. is a Christian ministry. Its foundation is the Lordship of Christ over all of life. Its motivation is Christ's command to "Feed my sheep." Its over-arching purpose is that the more abundant life which Christ came to make available shall indeed be the experience of all God's children who are involved in the tending and harvesting of the nation's crops.

"Abundant life" for Christians means first of all the

redeeming knowledge and love of our Lord Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. It also includes first-class political citizenship, adequate economic levels of living and normal acceptance in the human community.

Abundant life speaks also of individual integrity and participation, duty as well as right, responsibility as well as privilege.

The Migrant Ministry, with equal loving concern for both the farm workers and grower-employers, seeks an abundant life for all, with a balance of spiritual, cultural and material factors.

#### A. Presentation of the Christian Faith and Call to Discipleship

A primary concern of the Migrant Ministry is that seasonally employed agricultural wage-workers and their families shall have access to such basic ministries of the Christian faith as evangelism, worship and Christian education.

#### B. Reduction of Agricultural Migrancy to a Minimum

The Migrant Ministry will work to reduce the demand for migratory labor to a minimum through mechanization, diversification of crops, more thorough utilization of local labor supply and all other available methods.

#### C. Elimination of Foreign Farm Labor Importation Programs

This goal refers specifically and exclusively to the special importance of foreign contract workers for temporary agricultural employment such as that going on under the authority of Public Law 78.

#### D. Provision of Basic Education and Vocational Training Opportunities for Farm Workers

Governmental and private groups, including the Migrant Ministry itself, will contribute substantially to this goal to the extent that they succeed in involving the people themselves in planning and carrying out educational processes.

E. Extension of Educational Opportunity  
for the Children of  
Migratory Families

Demonstration of educational projects will be continued by the Migrant Ministry with the aim of stimulating public schools to discharge their legal and moral obligations in this regard.

F. Improvement of Living and Traveling  
Conditions and Community  
Services for Farm Workers

In view of the deplorable living conditions under which many ex-migrants are settling in so-called "rural fringe" communities, the Migrant Ministry will include these more settled farm workers also in its continuing concern for more adequate housing, health services and transportation facilities.

G. Elimination of Legal Exemptions and  
Discriminations

Where benefits to the workers impose undue hardships to grower-employers, steps should be taken to stabilize their income at an adequate level. In situations where the volume of migrancy swamps local facilities, a federal-aid program similar to that which assists educational systems in military impacted areas may hold a solution.

H. Social Acceptance and Inclusion in the Life  
of the Local Community

The Migrant Ministry accepts as one of its principal goals the assistance of local churches and the farm workers to understand and put into effect the processes by which the latter are included in the church and the community.

I. Responsible and Democratic Organization  
for Economic and Civic Self-Help

Laws and other public policies which have been established to regulate relationships between employers and employees to

establish justice, and to protect all the parties involved, should be extended to include agricultural wage workers.

**J. Flexibility and Adaptability in Goals  
and Policy To Meet the Rapid  
Changes Taking Place in the  
Agricultural Economy**

The Migrant Ministry will make continued, coordinated and creative efforts, in cooperation with churches and other helping agencies, to make positive and progressive their transitional experiences.

**IV. ETHICAL ISSUES IN THE RELATIONS BETWEEN  
GROWERS AND SEASONAL WORKERS  
IN INDUSTRIALIZED AGRICULTURE**  
by Shirley Greene

For the guidance of thought and the stimulation of conscience among men of good will, both within and outside the churches, this study guide identifies the following four areas of concern and responsibility. This listing does not pretend to be exhaustive or final. Individuals and groups using this document may find others of equal or even greater import.

**A. To What Extent Is Income Protection for Growers at Fair Levels Basic to Solution of the Economic Problems of Both Growers and Seasonal Labor in Industrialized Agriculture?**

Employers have a responsibility to deal justly with their employees under all circumstances. If economic conditions in the industry make such dealing unduly burdensome to the employer, a basic obligation falls upon employers to strive diligently to re-adjust the economic basis of the enterprise.

The ability of growers to provide adequate wages and equitable living and working conditions for their employees depends ultimately upon the economic health of their productive enterprise. To the extent that they may be caught in an intolerable cost-price squeeze due to economic forces over which they have no individual control, justice demands that orderly solutions be sought for the sake of both growers and farm workers.

In the National Council statements, what ethical judgment



may be found upon a frequently expressed grower position which, on the one hand, says, "We can't afford to do more for our seasonal workers" while, on the other hand, refuses to consider participation in programs to stabilize markets and protect grower income at fair and reasonable levels?

**B. What Alternatives Are Available to Growers Desirous of Improving the Economic Health of Their Industry?**

Growers, like other businessmen and entrepreneurs, are properly prone to examine economic and political proposals for all their possible effects and implications. The National Council's statements as cited above seem to hold out to the grower the alternatives of (a) a cooperative, self-help approach to their income problem; (b) an approach through federal legislation; or (c) some combination of these. Growers and other concerned citizens will want to consider, in respect to these or any other alternatives, such questions as the following:

Questions for study and discussion:

- a. In the complex and interlocking economy of our time, can the individual grower hope to survive economically apart from some form of organized market bargaining power? If such individualistic survival were possible, what ethical arguments could be advanced either for or against it?
- b. How do the alternatives (cooperative self-help vs. government program) measure up by the test of such highly regarded goals and values as these: Freedom of opportunity for both grower and worker? Justice to grower, worker, consumer? Efficiency in production and distribution? Adequacy and stability of income for both grower and worker?

What other values should be identified as criteria for judging alternative approaches?

- c. What is the Christian ethical basis of the view that growers have an inescapable responsibility to seek solutions to their economic problems which will be both just and equitable to workers as well as to themselves?

**C. What Ethical Demands Confront Growers and Workers?**

Both grower and seasonal farm worker are entitled to an equitable and dependable income in return for diligent and

efficient work. Being bound together in a common economic enterprise, each has certain obligations toward the other. As has been repeatedly demonstrated in other lines of basic production, the fairest and most orderly way of defining mutual obligations and respective rights between employers and employees is through the instrumentality of collective bargaining in good faith between responsible organizations of labor and management.

In agriculture as in other industries, violent opposition to labor organization tends to breed violence and irresponsibility in the labor movement. Christian ethics is opposed to the attitudes and methods of violence on either side.

#### D. What is the Role of Humane Social Legislation For Seasonal Farm Workers?

Among the legislative protections clearly advocated for seasonal farm workers in National Council policy statements are these: minimum wage coverage, unemployment insurance, workmen's compensation, full social security coverage, abolition of child labor abuses, minimum standards of housing, sanitation and transportation safety, availability of health and welfare services, and inclusion under the collective bargaining rights of the National Labor Relations Act. Some of these protections, if extended to seasonal farm workers, would involve additional costs to growers; others would represent a more generalized charge upon the whole community, state or nation.

#### Questions for study and discussion:

- a. May the Christian demand for justice and protection of the weak be denied by growers on the grounds of "economic hardship"?
- b. Under what circumstances may the conscientious grower find that protective legislation for the worker also represents a protection of his economic position against the unscrupulous grower?
- c. What obligation rests on consumers and citizens to support humane social legislation for farm workers? Do consumers and citizens have a parallel obligation in respect to the economic problems of growers? What is it?

## V. THE CHURCHES AND PERSISTENT POCKETS OF POVERTY IN THE U.S.A.

### A. Why the Church Is Concerned

God, who created the world and man, sent his Son into the world for its redemption. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us." By this mighty act God manifested his sovereignty over all the world and expressed his compassionate love for man. In Christ's ministry as the revealer of God's will and as redeemer of man he expressed compassion for the hungry, the naked, the oppressed, the ill and the poor. He enjoined us to love our neighbors as ourselves, to treat our neighbors as we would be treated, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

God continues to speak to us in the events of our time, and as faithful followers of his Son we must respond to what God is doing in the world. God calls upon us to devise economic institutions and activities that will serve the whole man and the common good. All the human arrangements by which men provide for their physical needs, govern themselves in community and nation, and act as stewards of the earth's resources stand under God's judgment.

As we look at the contemporary world in the light of God's continuing action, judgment and grace, we confess that we have failed to fulfill our calling to share equitably the fruits of creation, to eliminate poverty and to overcome its devastating consequences in human society.

We have accepted the benefits of a technological age for our own advantage. We have utilized the institutions of society to protect our situations of privilege. We have closed our eyes to the persistence of poverty in the midst of affluence and have accustomed ourselves to the existence of gross inequalities between persons, groups and communities in our society.

Too often in history and even today our churches have been identified with privilege and have perverted our faith to justify inequality, injustice and poverty.

### B. Definition and Scope of Poverty

In this consultation, we were confronted by undeniable and shocking evidence of continuing massive poverty in the midst of a national economy which boasts of its affluence and which possesses technological skills and productivity capable of providing adequate levels of living for our total population.

For example, the lowest one-fifth of American families currently receive an average annual income of approximately \$1,500. Ten million persons aged 65 or over receive \$1,000 or less a year; 7,000,000 people are dependent for all or part of their living on public assistance. Certain population groups such as the families of nonwhite wage earners, farm families and seasonal agricultural workers are particularly disadvantaged because of sub-standard income. There are also geographical areas in which chronic poverty adversely affects nearly all the people in the area.

While some will feel that the poverty line should be drawn at higher levels, the examples cited clearly indicate that substantial numbers of our fellow Americans live at income levels so low as seriously to restrict their opportunities for self-fulfillment or participation in the physical and cultural goods available in our affluent economy.

### C. With Reference to Poverty In Rural Areas

We define rural areas as those of 10,000 and under in population, which are rural in relationship and in juxtaposition, though they include more than agriculture. The rural church exists within two types of poverty situations: (1) a totally depressed area where poverty affects the life of the church itself, and (2) an area of general affluence reflected in the church's life, but where some people live in poverty. The latter is the more serious type, and in many instances if nothing is done this problem will affect the whole area.

The church has two roles to play: first, to do something about itself so that it makes the best use of what it has; second, to work with other churches and agencies in becoming itself an agency for total group action, or in exercising a supportive role. Even if the church can't do a job officially, it may select persons who will be supporters.

How can the church work with and serve low-income people in rural areas?

1. Pauperization is sin; the church's work anywhere should be based on the actual needs and desires of the people and upon their will to do, with "outside help" used only as it can be understood and accepted with dignity.
2. Too often the churches assume that people ought and want to belong to the church. A more realistic approach is to help them see their real problems and find solutions even if they choose less accepted methods.

3. Church leadership, clerical and lay, needs to be trained in new and radical methods of initiating action and in guiding low status groups based on: developing indigenous leadership, helping people identify their own concerns, developing mutual associations varied in form to help people help themselves and encouraging participation in the larger community. Such activities might be based upon experiences of the Migrant Citizenship Education Project of the National Council's Division of Home Missions and experiences of the Church in certain metropolitan areas of the United States.

Specific suggestions for the churches in relation to rural poverty on the national scale include: (a) attempts through indigenous processes to provide leadership from low-status groups to sit on local area and Rural Areas Development committees; (b) efforts to assist RAD committees to function through accepted group processes; (c) encouragement to the Extension Service to make training in such methods available for county agents; and (d) cooperation in one or two pilot projects with RAD through the National Council's Department of the Church in the Town and Country.

#### D. The Challenge of RAD

It is not likely that there will be another opportunity such as the Rural Areas Development program presents at this time. This all-out mustering of both private and public organizations and agencies on the development of rural areas is most opportune. Never before have so many groups joined together for a single social objective.

At stake is the well-being of the 67,000,000 people (more than the total population of either France or Germany) who prefer to live in town and country areas. Having contributed far out of proportion to their numbers to the total wealth and prosperity of this nation and the world, they now in turn must experience full development. It is now most evident that economic development is no longer a question dependent on large centers of population. Indeed, the personal and social values of decentralization may even well be second to the considerations of national defense. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Rural Areas Development aspect of the Area Redevelopment Act is provided over one-half of the allocated funds — plus the fact that these areas contain over one-half of America's poverty.

Nevertheless, even this major thrust cannot succeed apart from two important factors that have a direct bearing on what the churches of America can contribute.

1. The program is based on local initiative.
2. The people who need help the most must find an articulate voice.

It is at this point that local pastors can be most helpful. They, more than any other local group, can aid in the stimulation of initiative, and the pastors can both seek out and help the dispossessed become articulate. To assume that the present county or town power structures will do this is an illusion. Too much of vested interest is at stake. It is up to the pastor and his dedicated and sensitive laymen. Furthermore, this program (RAD) will dissipate itself if forced to spread its relatively meager resources too widely. Economic, and its consequence, social development can only occur if resources are adequate. Old rivalries between town and town must be absorbed into a comprehensive cooperative area development approach. Again, it is up to the pastor as he works with the other pastors of such an economic area to set an example of cooperation and to aid in the process of reconciliation. Economic salvation will never occur apart from such social reconciliation.

The county agricultural agent has the facts on the RAD program, and many such agents demonstrate great skill in community development. Yet, it must be remembered that up until very recently these men were expected to handle only the technical problems of agriculture; the pastor, both by temperament and training, has always been concerned with personal and social development. It is the conviction of many that if we wait until all county agents become skilled in community development, the time for such development will have passed. There is little other choice than for pastors to take the initiative in making themselves available for the program of Rural Areas Development. This is it!

**VI. THE PURPOSE AND PROGRAM OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE CHURCH IN TOWN AND COUNTRY  
DIVISION OF HOME MISSIONS  
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN  
THE U.S.A.**

The general purpose of the department is to help the church to appreciate and to achieve its mission in town and country.

In pursuance of this purpose, it is the program of the department to:

1. Stimulate, cooperate with and coordinate the town and country work of the denominations and communions related to the department.
2. Articulate the concerns of the people and churches of town and country areas.
3. Aid in the development and implementation of regional and local ecumenical strategies.
4. Provide opportunities for fellowship and discussion among administrators, educators, pastors and laymen.
5. Encourage and cooperate in the development of programs of continuing education for town and country church leadership, both professional and lay.
6. Produce and/or disseminate relevant literature and audio-visual materials.
7. Stimulate, interpret and utilize research methods and materials.
8. Hold or participate in convocations, conferences and consultations.
9. Cooperate with other units of the National Council of Churches, with state and local councils of churches, with appropriate units of the World Council of Churches and with other religious and secular organizations, associations and institutions at points relevant to the interests of the church in town and country and its effective Christian witness.
10. Such other purposes and functions as may be assigned by the Executive Board of the Division of Home Missions.

#### A. Committees

The Department of the Church in Town and Country is fortunate in that it is able to function through a number of committees whose chairmen and members are both skilled and dedicated. It is in terms of the work of these committees that the department is able to progress. The chairmen of these committees cooperate so well together that for all practical purposes they function as staff members of the Department of the Church in Town and Country and, indeed, the Division of Home Missions.

1. Presidential Commission on Country Life.
2. Communications.
3. Continuing Education.
4. Convocation.

5. Committee on Rural, Economic and Social Trends.
6. Interchurch Relations.
7. Northern Great Plains.
8. Research.
9. Southern Appalachian Committee.
10. In addition there is much inter-disciplinary cooperation through the Director and other members of the Department serving on boards and committees of other units of the National Council and of the following:

Boy Scouts of America

Christian Rural Fellowship

Merom Renewal Project

National Council on Agricultural Life and Labor

National Sharecroppers Fund

Rural Areas Development

Soil Stewardship

4-H Club

## VII. SOME CONSIDERATIONS IN ACHIEVING ADEQUATE AND REASONABLY STABLE INCOMES BY FARMERS

by Mervin G. Smith

Farmers have low incomes because (1) their prices are depressed as a result of the imbalance between total United States farm production and consumption, or (2) they have relatively low productivity due to difficulties of adjustments, low technical and management skill and other factors.

The main objective of government farm policies has been to increase farm income. Many kinds of farm programs have been in operation and others are proposed. People should be concerned and learn more about the low farm income problem and improve their proficiency of evaluating and helping our government to develop good and sound farm income policies.

Since the agricultural sector of our economy is interrelated with the rest of the economy, the achievement of agricultural and social objectives both are influenced by farm income policies. In the evaluation of policies, one needs to take into consideration not only the farm income objective but many other objectives, both for agriculture and for general society.

There are some 15 different types of government farm income policies. These are grouped according to their immediate purpose:

- (A) Expanding Demand: (1) domestic, (2) foreign, (3) new uses.



(B) Restricting Production and Marketing: (4) marketing quotas, (5) restricting land use, (6) restricting capital and technology, (7) reducing farm labor.

(C) Increasing Farm Prices and Incomes Directly: (8) price supports and storage; (9) direct payments; (10) multiple prices, market orders, market agreements; (11) low income insurance and direct subsidy.

(D) Improving the Services for Farmers and Their Individual Productivity: (12) cooperatives, marketing, credit, services; (13) direct individual assistance; (14) education; (15) research.

Almost all policy suggestions that have ever been made can be grouped into one or a combination of some of these 15 types of programs. If anyone can classify a new proposal into these types, he might be able to evaluate it more readily. In the past we have had a package of these various types of programs. Presently, we have all types of the demand expanding programs, a number of different programs of restricting and adjusting land use, programs of price supports and storage, direct payments to supplement farm prices, multiple pricing and marketing orders, programs for encouraging cooperatives and other service development programs, education and research.

Improvement in our farm policies might consist of a different package of these types of policies and of more or less emphasis on different types of policies. The package which any one person would suggest will depend on how well he understands the low farm income problem and its causes, how much information he has on the consequences of each policy and on his individual values.

No attempt was made here to put an ideal package of policies together. Instead, an attempt was made to define the low farm income problem, to present and analyze alternatives and to develop a more systematic method of evaluation.