

EARL O. HEADY  
LEE G. BURCHINAL  
Iowa State University

## *The Concern With Goals and Values in Agriculture*

THE MAJOR PROBLEMS in farm policy evidently are those of goals and values. Agriculture has been burdened with surpluses, declining income and low resource returns for the last decade. The situation is not new. Aside from depression and war which temporarily concealed it, the tendency towards surplus capacity and tardy income growth has existed since the 1920's. But the problem is now approaching crisis magnitude. Mammoth government stocks are growing in embarrassment to farm people and in cost to the general public. Yet farm prices and income still decline. The problem continues not because economists lack general understanding of its causes or alternatives which could alleviate it, but because public agreement is generally lacking on the appropriate means and, to an extent, on the proper objectives of farm policy. Economists can suggest a half dozen effective means for eliminating the problem, whether the criterion be one of improving farm income, equalizing resource returns with other industries, bettering the allocation of resources between agriculture and other industries for national benefit or eliminating surplus stocks and production.

Numerous methods exist for attaining any one of these as an end per se. However, even where farm and nonfarm publics can generally agree on an end or objective, such as restricting the rate of growth and cost of surplus stocks, there is lack of agreement on the methods and timing for doing so. The build-up in and cost of stocks could certainly be eliminated through strict marketing quotas or free market prices, or several alternatives between these extremes. Incomes could be better supplemented and at lower public cost by policy means other than those now employed. But even though several means clearly exist for attaining agreeable ends, appropriate legislation has not been accomplished, evidently because of value conflicts. Too, the ultimate ends or objectives of farm policy, particularly in relation to national economic and foreign policy, evidently involve values.

Because the basic issues in farm policy are value oriented, and are not purely problems of economic science, it is necessary to bring the problem of values explicitly into focus in order that research workers, educators, administrators, and the public will better understand the nature and importance of the complex issues which are involved. The program has been structured in an interdisciplinary manner because the problems involved relate to fields of sociology, anthropology, political science, social theory, psychology and economics. The critical problems facing agriculture, as is also true for our society generally, in the 1960's include those related to value orientations. An even greater need is to appraise our values and chart a policy course which is consistent with general societal goals. In this context, a near-crisis exists in farm policy. Recent and current policies apparently have failed, not only to solve the basic farm problem, defined as it may be related to alternative objectives or ideal types, but also failed to provide any great satisfaction to any major economic or political group.

### INFORMATIONAL NEEDS

Thus we establish a starting point in facing the basic issues; we are not expected to provide answers to all questions of values in agricultural policy. The planning committee hopes, however, that it will stimulate further research, thought and discussion in respect to goals and values as these relate to agricultural policy. But effort should not stop here. The goal and value conflicts which serve as obstacles to solution of major farm problems will not be resolved through exchange of ideas or improved hypotheses by a few score of professional persons. Neither will they be resolved by increased knowledge on the part of a few congressmen. Both national and farm policy are decided largely and ultimately by the public through the voting mechanism. Hence, goal and value conflicts may best be resolved through extended education.

In particular, land grant colleges and universities need to put much more emphasis on public affairs in extension and other educational programs. Perhaps not more than a dozen state extension services, covering only a small fraction of the nation's voters, now have as much as one full-time person assigned to public affairs education. National policy is not determined by the people of a dozen states, and increased public investment in this area is needed.

The specific objective of such education is not, of course, to impose values or value judgments on people. Instead, it is to

provide objective facts and information and intelligent discussion so that: individuals can better identify alternative goals and formulate their values accordingly; they can better understand conditions of conflict and complementarity among various goals and ends; they can better evaluate the consequences of following different policy means; they can more effectively identify the most efficient and effective means for attaining particular policy ends; and they can even make improved distinction between ends and means.

Leaders among both farm and nonfarm publics are intelligent. Experience in states with broad social science and public affairs extension programs indicates that, given facts and information, people can better order and articulate their values, can better associate themselves with public goals, and can make more intelligent appraisal of policy means. However, there will continue to be too little basis for these steps important to public policy formulation and national purposes until more public educational institutions develop programs and devote more resources to this general area. Some may refrain from doing so because they fear the subjects involved are controversial. But again, experience of those states with broad extension education programs in social sciences indicates that this need not be so, if educators are objective and do not try to impose value judgments on the public they serve. In fact, the public image of land grant colleges and universities likely is larger, and public financial support is probably broader, where extensive educational programs in public affairs are carried on with the vigor of education in the production technology. The public image of the land grant colleges and universities needs to be broadened substantially beyond that of purveyors of production technology if these colleges and universities are to fulfill their role in helping people to understand the urgency of better defining our public purposes and in developing appropriate policy elements; then, if the contribution of further improvement in technology is to be understood better in terms of contribution to long-run national objectives, broad financial support should be made available for this program.

We hope to provide a more substantial basis than previously has existed for developing further hypotheses and research, as well as public knowledge and understanding, relative to the value conflicts in agricultural policy. It would be unfortunate, however, if organized effort in this direction were to cease with this perhaps small and tardy beginning.

## VALUE AND POLICY CONFLICT

Not all answers will be given here to the goals and values problems because the phenomena are too broad and complex. In the first place, conflict does not arise over a set of near-ultimate goals or ends such as life, liberty and happiness. Western society agrees more or less unanimously on these "high level" or generalized ends, although as American society has become increasingly affluent and wealthy it has found itself more undecided and less unanimous on the means most appropriate to attain maximum happiness. But the operational problems confronting the public in deciding future farm policy involve ends which are not so easily identified and articulated. To a large extent the ends of life, liberty and happiness are complementary or noncompetitive. Over a fairly wide range, more of one may be attained without sacrifice of another, or even with a gain in another. Still, custom and legislation place restraints on liberty in order that freedom on the part of some individuals does not lessen the life and happiness of others.

But these issues are much sharper at the level of farm policy. Freedom of decision and action as a policy objective is directly competitive with production control as a policy means for attaining the intermediate policy end of increased prices or improved farm income. As mentioned previously, conflict on acceptable means exists even where we have agreement on such direct or intermediate goals as reducing the size of the farm surplus. Conflict is over the means, or the collection of means, to attain this specific goal in conjunction with other goals. On the one hand, we could use free market prices for this purpose, but at a particular short-run sacrifice in income and people in segments of farming. On the other hand, we could set marketing quotas for all products, but with particular restraint on the efficacy of prices and the decision freedoms of farmers. Here the conflict may be over specific means as they are tied to ends one step higher in the means-ends hierarchy. The means and ends themselves become intertwined and it becomes difficult for the public to distinguish among them. But in other cases the means take on the immediate characteristics of ends, as they almost always do in the means-ends chain, and public disagreement or conflict arises directly over the means themselves. Disagreement over means, which momentarily become ends of debate, has come into sharp focus over such agricultural policy mechanisms as direct payments, free market prices and cross compliance paired against their policy alternatives. Disagreement among these alternative means exists evidently because of differences in values in respect

to what method ought to be used to alleviate a particular problem and attain a specific goal.

Intermediate goals in respect to number and size of farms and magnitude of the farm population also give rise to policy conflicts because of the heterogeneous values among segments of farm and nonfarm publics. A policy or market mechanism which leads to larger and fewer farms is, within the value structure of some farm people, the antithesis of all that has been good in the American way of life, even if nonprice mechanisms must be used to retain these conditions. Values which lead others to believe that greater play of prices is most consistent with the American way of life, even if substantial changes must result in size and number of farms and in magnitude of the farm population, are held just as deeply by others.

In general, then, means and ends are not discrete. Neither do ends or goals serve entirely as discrete alternatives with constant marginal rates of substitution. In the realm of human satisfaction and acceptance, the problem is not one of determining which discrete goal or end should be selected over another or all others. Instead, it is a problem of determining what mix or combination of goals, at the various levels in the means-ends hierarchy, is optimum, desirable or acceptable. This is true since the value system of an individual, community or society is not represented by an indifference map wherein the individual indifference curve is linear, denoting that each unit gain towards one goal causes an equal sacrifice in satisfaction for all units of other goals foregone. Instead, the indifference lines serving as the counterpart of social values in respect to goals for public policy are curved, denoting that a combination of competing goals or ends is necessary for maximizing quantities which are relevant both for the individual and the community. Under these conditions, one goal is seldom selected to the exclusion of all others. Instead, there exists some combination of competing goals, with some of one being sacrificed to gain part of another, which must be decided upon by society. Policies need to be melded accordingly and, even though the process is difficult, it is hoped that later papers can suggest the processes and feasibilities for doing so.

It is difficult to systematize and organize means for resolving all conflicts in public policy because the public itself is so heterogeneous. Except for crises such as those representing threats to national existence and continuance of the main thread of our social system, we do not attach ourselves to a single national purpose, with policies devoted mainly to this singular end. There is, in fact, not one public but many publics, each with a different

goal for, or special interest in, economic structure and policy for agriculture. The policies most beneficial to one of these publics or special interest groups is often in contradiction to that most beneficial to another public or economic sector. Pressures develop accordingly around agricultural policy. Thus the firms which sell inputs to farmers, those which store surpluses or those who process farm products have interest in particular types of farm programs, some in conflict with each and some in conflict with programs directed towards solution of the farm income and surplus problems. Or, programs which serve to curtail output or adjust the labor force and population of agriculture, as a means of price improvement and surplus control, are not those which correspond to the particular interests of local businesses and public institutions in rural communities. But even at the farm level, numerous publics exist and have interest in different types of farm policies or, in some cases, different goals for policy. Some farmers sell feed and are interested in high support prices for grain; others use it as a livestock input and are interested in buying it at a low price. Farm publics also differ in interest by geographic and commodity groupings, or even by size and scale of operations. In general, the consuming public may desire abundant and cheap food while the farm-producing public might prefer greater scarcity and higher prices.

Out of this maze of interest groups must be melded agricultural policy elements which allow reasonable attainment of broader national purposes and goals. The task is not impossible and perhaps is easier than our current maze and the sometimes inconsistent set of farm policy elements would lead us to believe. Some, but certainly not all, of the conflicts in agricultural policy arise because the public lacks information before action programs are put into effect. In important cases, the public is unaware that two policy elements, existing side by side, are in opposition in respect to attainment of particular objectives or goals. Sometimes it does not realize that greater attainment of one goal requires sacrifice in another.

Our present agricultural and food policy structure abounds with elements which conflict as ends or as means of attaining a particular objective. On the one hand we have programs which pay farmers to use inputs which increase output. Payments, under the label of soil conservation, for irrigation or soil amendments used on level land are examples. On the other hand, we have used direct payments to farmers to lessen land and related inputs as a means of decreasing output. Other conflicting policy elements and goals are less apparent or arise unwittingly. An example may be the desire for abundant and low cost food for

consumers. A century back, with higher demand elasticities for food, this goal may have been entirely consistent with improved incomes for farmers. But gradually over time, as per capita income has increased and demand elasticities have declined, abundant and low cost food for consumers has come to conflict with farm income, at least starting from the structure in number and size of farms that has existed. Even in academic circles, land grant colleges and universities find that the "close at hand" goals, with which they have believed themselves to serve the public, also may conflict. The efficiency of the research and extension education departments, for example, in providing the foundation for a new structure of farming, has caused the resident teaching departments to wonder why they have fewer undergraduate students to service.

### LEVELS OF GENERALIZED VALUES

An important question on goals and values is: At what level of generalization can we identify goals or values which have broad acceptance by the diverse publics or sectors of our society? The goals of life, liberty and happiness are too broad and general to be used in formulating acceptable and workable farm policies. Even at this level of generalization, however, we could not obtain agreement by all sectors on farm policy. While all sectors of agriculture undoubtedly would agree on liberty for our society — in the sense of freedom for the nation to govern itself without interference by an outside country — they do not agree similarly on complete liberty in production and marketing decisions. On the one hand, we have strong insistence by some organized groups that this freedom of decision be retained or returned to the farm industry. But just as vigorously, other groups campaign for more control over production and marketing. Some farm groups have democratically voted production controls and sacrifice of some liberty in decisions. Examples are those of tobacco and wheat. But even farmers who are homogeneous in the sense that they derive their income from cattle do not agree in respect to liberty in decisions. Cattle ranchers stump strongly for freedom, but dairy farmers in major milk sheds willingly accept quotas and marketing orders.

At a somewhat lower level in generalization are the more mechanical goals of economics. Two general goals exist in welfare economics and are directed toward maximization of utility or satisfaction by a society. These are efficiency in production and efficiency in consumption and the optimum allocation of

resources and income respectively among persons, commodities, time periods and locations. Criteria exist, in marginal terms, as a means of specifying subgoals or conditions which must exist if the two over-all welfare economic goals are to be attained. These criteria recognize also that reorganization of economic activity and structures which result in gain to the community or society may cause sacrifice and diminished utility to particular sectors of it. However, because of the inability to make exact interpersonal utility comparisons, principles of compensation are specified to assure that when some persons or groups are made "better off," none are made "worse off."

In a general way, society has subscribed to these general goals in economic organization. When it condemns land for public buildings or highways, it compensates the owners. Through the Sherman Act and other antitrust legislation, attempts were made to assure a degree of competition which is reasonably consistent with the subgoals or marginal conditions which must exist for the more general goal of efficiency of production. To assure some minimum level of consumption, roughly consistent with necessary marginal conditions for an optimum allocation of income, we have provided unemployment compensation, public schools, food distribution to the needy and have endorsed the progressive income tax. For farm policy in particular, the various subsidy schemes used over the last three decades probably are a societal reflection of the compensation principle. The public investment in making food abundant depresses income under the low price elasticities of demand which prevail for farm products. Hence, we might interpret the various farm price and income support devices as an act of society to compensate farmers for the income sacrifice which they experience under our policy of abundant and low cost food as a product of our efficient public research and education institutions and certain other policies in agriculture.

But obviously, society has not subscribed fully to the over-all goals, or to the particular subgoals and marginal conditions, of modern welfare economics. To do so might be considered interference with other value-goal orientations. It has placed restraints on extremes in monopoly power, but it has not reduced industry organization, even where increasing scale returns are unimportant, to the pure competition model in order that the appropriate marginal conditions prevail. To do so would conflict, perhaps, with liberty or freedom in decision, or even with the "American business way."

At a less general goal-value level in economics, we have such goals as economic progress, equity in income distribution and



stability in income, the latter being a reference to maintenance of business stability and employment opportunities. These goals are "less strenuous," in the sense that they do not require the "tight" marginal conditions associated with the text in welfare economics. Society may simply define the degree to which these goals are desirable, or failure to attain them is undesirable. Maximum and/or minimum restraints are expressed accordingly through social policy. Evidently most individual publics or groups which make up American society desire economic progress. Yet we have no evidence that the maximum rate of economic growth is desired.<sup>1</sup> Any leading economist or businessman could mention a dozen ways in which obstacles to progress could be lessened and the rate of economic growth accelerated. Greater public investment in education, improved counseling and employment services, aid to underdeveloped communities and elimination of featherbedding and particular monopoly restraints in use of technologies are examples. Still we accept a less-than-maximum rate of growth, even though economic progress is an obvious national purpose, because it is not an ultimate goal and is not valued discretely at a higher level than all other goals. Perhaps in agriculture we are even indicating that the rate of progress exceeds that acceptable relative to other goals and values. The adjustment in size and number of farms and the size of the farm population has promised to be more rapid than can be assimilated by rural communities, given the particular value orientation around previous agricultural structures. This possibility is suggested in the income transfer payments we make to farmers, tending to hold them to agriculture and the rural community when the flow of new technology and the pressures of the market would detach more of them from these bases.

Another step down the ladder of goal generality is represented by those rooted in economics, political science and sociology and tied directly to farming. To mention a few, we have: preservation of the family farm; the Jeffersonian doctrine of a large rural population to insure democracy; or even the sometimes-stated policy goal of guarantee that not all the social cost stemming from the share of national progress attributable to agriculture falls on farm people. But again, while society may have accepted these more specific goals for agriculture, it has not attempted to "maximize" them because they fail to serve as discrete goals substituting at a high and constant marginal rate for goals of other orientation.

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<sup>1</sup>Too, while American society has reflected a goal of some equity in income distribution, it has not tried to maximize this goal. Rather, it more nearly has tried to provide a minimum in level in availability of consumption opportunities.

Agricultural scientists have themselves espoused less general goals for agriculture which represent value judgements. In the technical fields, at the time surpluses began to become continuous and permanent, some have attempted justification of their efforts with the value-loaded statement, "but we will always want efficiency," referring to efforts to increase output from our agricultural resources. Similarly in economics, while less so now than a decade back, some agricultural policy experts evidently selected the economic efficiency model as an end. Supposing the marginal conditions for equilibrium, they have said, "we ought to move people from farms in order that marginal productivity of farm labor might be increased." There are, of course, two ways in which the marginal productivity of labor in agriculture might be increased and selection of one over the other itself requires a value judgement. Given the inelastic demands for farm products, increased supply control or monopolistic marketing practices are an alternative to reduction of the agricultural labor force as a means of increasing the marginal return of farm work. Used in a degree in certain nonfarm industries, production quotas and monopolistic output and price policies evidently are not in major conflict with the basic value system of American society. Yet one of the major conflicts in agricultural policy is over this very issue.

Apparently, then, it is difficult to identify a level of generality in goals and values which might remove all conflicts in farm policies. If it were impossible to do so, we could throw up our hands and go home. But the "guts" of the farm problem lies in the area of goals and values and we believe important progress here is possible. The situation is confused because the problem has not been sufficiently and specifically recognized as one of goals and values. We have not, in fact, spelled out goals for policy and structure of agriculture with any specific content. Largely we have tried to use "patch up" policies, attempting programs which simply take care of the "problems of this planting season," without examining their longer-run effect. We have done little to decide where we want to go in agricultural structure, given the prospects and pulls of national economic growth and our growing challenges in world society. It is not impossible that the diverse economic sectors with interest in agriculture could agree on some general goals for the agriculture which should exist for 1970 or 1975. Then we could use short-run policies which alleviate problems of the moment but do not lead us far astray from the longer-run target. From study, for example, it appears that many farm couples who wish income supports so that they may remain in agriculture do not hold firmly to this goal and policy for their sons.

Too, progress will be made when the many opposing groups in farm policy recognize the problem as one of goals and values, with conflict being at particular levels in goal-value generality. In communication, they might well find themselves in agreement for certain goals of high generality and greater length of time. With differences arising over more specific goals and short-run policies, greater agreement would be possible. Then recognizing that values and goals are not discrete, substituting at constant rates and entirely for each other, the optimum mix of policy elements might be more nearly attained, recognizing the particular values of each sector. Unfortunately, at the present, groups differing in respect to major farm policy elements seem to be shouting at each other and to the general public: "... only our values and goals should prevail; yours should be submerged."

The real positive prospect is that the farm problem will be recognized as one in goals and values, and education and communication will be developed accordingly. Progress will then be in sight and citizens will have a foundation for more clearly seeing the basis and consequences of particular policy courses. In their own minds, they will have information for formulating and articulating goals which are meaningful to themselves, to the growth trends of the national economy and to the nation's world responsibilities.

We adhere to this hypothesis. The public has not been given the probable outcome of particular policies, even where these were quite apparent. They have not been sufficiently informed of the compatibility or conflict among different agricultural policy elements, or between these and other developments such as national economic development. Often they cannot visualize the outcome of a particular program because the universe with which they are acquainted is too small. Too frequently, policies have been enacted in an informational void. This is true for several important national policies, as well as those for agriculture specifically. Foreign policy is no exception. Generally we have been short of funds for certain national purposes in this respect. But still there has been no systematic and organized informational effort to explain objectively the needs and consequences of these investments. Their purposes and outcomes are only held vaguely in the minds of most people.

## PERSPECTIVE IN AMERICAN SOCIETY

Partly, the need for a basic examination of goals and values for agricultural organization and policy has, as is true for our

growing concern for better defining our national purposes, simply "crept up on us." The physical and economic structure of agriculture has been changing rapidly, largely as a result of (a) the rapid flow of new technology into the industry and (b) continued national economic growth, affecting both the relative rewards of resources used in different industries and the consumption opportunities open to people. Agricultural production is oriented increasingly toward and highly integrated with the dominant commercial-industrial interests and social systems of our total society. Modern agriculture, its changes and its problems, must be analyzed and explained in terms of the major developments in American society. Its value systems, goal patterns, social organization, technical development, and its recurring social, political and economic crises are inseparable from those of our total society. For these reasons, we are approaching the examination of one contemporary American social problem — that of agriculture — from the broad perspective of development in American society, not just the agricultural sector per se. Attention is focused upon general value-goal patterns of American society, and then within this context, upon value-goal patterns which pertain to the structure and functioning of the American agricultural industry.

To many students of society, this approach is the only reasonable one in analysis of any social phenomena because value patterns define which developments should be construed as "problems" or "progress." Furthermore, general value systems prescribe the legitimate or acceptable means which can be used to ameliorate conditions otherwise precluding the attainment of societally desirable goals. Unfortunately, however, in the analyses of variables which have led to the present imbalance between the agricultural and nonagricultural sectors of our society and which may contribute to the solution of this imbalance, value or goal patterns are frequently assumed or ignored. Even where they are recognized, seldom are they clearly articulated.

This conference has as one objective an explicit examination of value-goal patterns as these impede or facilitate current and future developments designed to bring incomes in agriculture to levels comparable with nonfarm economic activity, or to adjust resource use in the directions expressed through the pulls of the market. Of course, that either of these ends should be attained is itself a value judgement.

We live in the midst of an international crisis requiring us to re-examine our national values and goals, as well as the policies for attaining these goals. The present ferment and discussion on national goals and values has direct relevance for agricultural

policy, rural community development and farm family living. In turn, examination of the value-goal patterns as these relate to the agricultural sector of our society can contribute to a clarification of our national goals and values. However, the problem of clarifying goals and values for American agriculture is complicated by at least two sets of conditions, both of which have been referred to previously: (1) the rapid shift in relative demand for farm and nonfarm labor, with consequent changes in population and in the American social structure and (2) the increasing heterogeneity of the American society. Later participants in this program will examine these and related factors in greater detail. However, brief consideration of them is appropriate at this point, to further indicate the need and urgency for examining the value-goal systems of American agriculture specifically.

#### Relative Composition of Labor Force and Population

First, we have become fond of comparing the relatively isolated farm community of the pre-twentieth century era, with its essentially closed social system and local marketing arrangements, with the contemporary rural scene which has and still is undergoing vast technical and social change. However, these comparisons are generally focused upon overt technological and social differences. Profound changes in value systems also have been involved. In the relatively isolated, self-sufficient community of the last century, values were integrated around the institutions of the local community: the farm family, the church and local government. Under impact of the technological, demographic and social changes of this century, a new agriculture, closely integrated with industries and businesses supplying its inputs and receiving its outputs, has been emerging. These changes are expressed in an increased number of large commercial farms, as well as an increase in part-time farming. It also is expressed in such developments as: contract farming or vertical integration; growth of farmers' cooperatives which integrate agricultural production with many other functions of production, marketing and consumption; and marketing arrangements and orders designed to maintain price differentials. Agriculture has become increasingly dependent on both government programs and the "agribusiness" sector of the economy. These changes have required a reintegration of values, a process which is not fully completed and which is weighted with economic and political motivations.

While these technical, demographic, economic and value-goal

changes have taken place at rapid pace, value premises upon which public pronouncements have been based concerning the state of agriculture and the ideas and beliefs regarding the social, moral and personal values of rural life, have been less dynamic. Clearly the values associated with the appeal of urban-centered conveniences and the acquisition of the goods and services of the "good life" are binding both farming operations and the aspirations of farm families closer to the business-industrial economy of the United States. At the same time, however, values associated with the tenacity of ideas rooted in Jeffersonian democracy and rural idealism are still reflected in appeals of agricultural policy. Failure to adjust our image of rural America and to adapt policies, which are expressions of value statements, consistent with the economic, technological and social characteristics of modern agriculture is probably a main cause of our inability to make demonstrable progress in solving the pressing surplus and income problems of the industry.

Our inability to identify a set of values and goals for American agriculture which is consistent with our national and international goals is, in part, a reflection of the characteristics of values themselves: value systems provide internalized guides, invested with a high degree of affect and meaning for participants. Goal-directed behavior associated with values is felt to be binding for the personality, conscience, life goals, preferred material acquisitions and subjective states of various kinds. These characteristics change slowly, both at the individual level and at the institutionalized or group level. These emotionally laden characteristics of value-goal systems need to be kept in mind constantly as agricultural adjustment proposals are made.

### Heterogeneity of Society

The second point for discussion in clarifying goal-value systems as they relate to solutions of agricultural problems is the heterogeneous character of American society. At one time, perhaps prior to the Civil War, generalized American values and goals were those of an agricultural people. But today, the basic orientation for economic, political and social activities in the United States is that of gesellschaft integration based on industrial production and commercialism, as well as bureaucratic organization. This orientation is opposed to the earlier gemeinschaft character of personal relations which dominated the economic, political and social life of rural society. Because of the gesellschaft character of the American society and the varied social

and ethnic composition of our population, it is not surprising to find that American society does not have a completely consistent and integrated value structure. Rather, the total society is characterized by diversity and varying rates of change in value patterns. This is true within agriculture, as well as for the total society. Understandably, then, the farm policies which appeal to one sector of agriculture do not appeal to other sectors. Some of our major policy conflicts stem from the fact that the different sectors of agriculture do not recognize this condition and attempt to cause all of agriculture to embrace their policy proposals, and hence their construct of values.

The complex division of labor, regional differentials in economic growth, overlapping of farm and urban areas of residence and socialization and the proliferation of special interest institutions and organizations themselves give rise to value-goal differentials. These developments tend to increase the saliency of value-goal patterns around which institutions are formed and to insulate different value-goal patterns from one another. Potential conflict and strain, as well as potential reinforcement and integration, are thereby avoided. Yet such insulation is difficult to maintain in the open system of the American social order. A foremost characteristic of the American social order is its integration around economic and political foci and the delicate interdependence of these two structures. Because of this high degree of interdependence, groups holding differing and frequently incompatible values not only become aware of one another, but interact directly. In the national social system, this awareness and interaction lead to political struggle.

The recurring farm policy debate is ample evidence of this process. The debate continues because values relative to economic and political action in American society in general and for American agriculture in particular are not clearly defined. At this point, it is redundant to say that the degree to which government should be involved in American agriculture is a controversial question. But this controversy continues because there are value differences between farm and urban interest groups and within the farm sector of society. There is diversity of value systems directly in relation to the desired structure and functioning of American agriculture. Frequently large commercial farmers or owners adhere to different value-goal patterns for agriculture, at least over their commodity grouping, than do smaller farm owners and operators. Different commodity groups have value-goal patterns which reflect their particularistic interests, rather than the universalistic agricultural or national interests. Still other value-goal patterns for American agriculture

are endorsed by the representatives of the "agribusiness" organizations. This diversity complicates the analysis of values and goals of or for American agriculture. However, it is essential to maintain this comprehensive view of values if policy is to be analyzed effectively.

We do not infer that value-goal systems held by these and other groups are static and operate in isolation as separate units. Instead, value frames of reference are constantly shifting and recombining in configurations stemming from the processes of change, interdependence, conflict, adaptation and reformulation. Agricultural policy prescriptions by persons in action groups in and related to agriculture, as well as by nonfarm persons and groups, are involved in this ferment of social interaction. Eventually this interaction is reflected in the political process, the only means which we have for melding the aspirations of the various groups and for correcting policy voids or excesses accordingly.

### GENERAL SOCIAL VALUES

Emphasis above was on the heterogeneous character of groupings in American society and the concomitant value differences. We do not wish to imply that there are no more or less general values of American society. Without some degree of value integration, even if only at a high level of abstraction, no society could function inter-generationally, assimilate new elements, adjust to internal and external demands and still maintain its distinctive character. American society, as all societies, does have some degree of value integration. These generalized values provide one basis for appeal for resolving conflicts which prevent solution of the most pressing problems of American agriculture. Generalized values are especially characterized as those which are complementary among the various publics or interest groups of society. Hence, a starting point, in obtaining agreement on farm policy, might be identification of these areas of complementarity in goals and values. Following this, compatible adjustments and compensation to minimize sacrifice of particular groups or to cause no group to be made "worse off" for the gain of others, might be made where competitive goals and value systems are involved. It is an ambitious hope that this volume may sow seeds leading in this systematic direction.

Some dominant values in American society can be identified at a high level of abstract inference. Among generalized value sets which might be mentioned, Robin Williams suggests the



dominant value themes of American society to be the following:<sup>2</sup> (1) active mastery of the natural world, rather than passive acceptance; (2) interest in the external world of things and events rather than the internal world of meaning and affect; (3) an open rather than closed world view, with emphasis on change and personal types which are outgoing and assimilative; (4) faith based in rationalism as opposed to traditionalism, with de-emphasis on the past and orientation based towards the future; (5) acceptance of a universalistic rather than a particularistic ethic; (6) preference for "horizontal" rather than "vertical" interpersonal relations: peer-relations, not superordinate-subordinate relations, equality rather than hierarchy; and (7) emphasis on individual personality rather than group identity and responsibility.

Such generalized value patterns include specific orientations which guide behavior in the economic, political and social arenas of interaction. Specific orientations characteristic of American society include a set of work-related values such as achievement and success, activity and work, efficiency and practicality, material comforts and science and secular rationality; and a set of political-related variables such as respect for individual personality, equality, freedom, democracy and humanitarianism. Conflicts among these goals are obvious in application to specific aspects of American behavior or farm programs, again largely because goals are not discrete with constant marginal rates of substitution.

### RESOLVING VALUE CONFLICTS FOR AGRICULTURE

To the extent that generalized value orientations can be identified for American society, given the rapid change taking place in economic and social structure and the particular adaptations that other resource and production groups have made for themselves, agriculture and the community in general must resolve certain value conflicts as they relate to farming. Some of the more important ones appear to be the following:

1. To what extent can farm policies, determined democratically, depriving farmers of individual choice of compliance or non-compliance be reconciled with freedom?
2. Should farmers be given as much control over price as other major economic sectors of American industry, given the forward progress in economic and technical development of

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<sup>2</sup>Robin Williams, *American Society*. Knopf, New York. 1951. Pp. 388-442.

agriculture, or should the agricultural environment be restrained to one of pure market competition among farmers?

3. To what extent can we afford to give priority to value and goal patterns focused on material comforts as compared to maintaining a sufficient posture for protecting values inherent in our desire for freedom and equality?
4. Will our success in emphasizing efficiency in agricultural production, as implemented by science, technology and secular rationality, require that values associated with work and activity or achievement and success be adjusted in the direction of greater leisure?
5. To what extent can we resolve the desire for security and stability in economic affairs and the rapid rate of technical progress and structural change in agriculture?
6. Do values associated with achievement and success and work and activity make us less sensitive to values associated with humanitarianism? United States agricultural surpluses and world food shortages come to mind as a concrete example.

Other questions could be raised, but we leave these to persons presenting the remaining chapters.

In this discussion we have attempted to indicate the importance of analyzing general values and goals in relation to those of agriculture. If progress is to be made in the solution of current agricultural problems, value and goal patterns with respect to the structure and functioning of agriculture, held by various subgroups of American society with conflicting value-goal patterns in respect to American agriculture, must be articulated as clearly as possible. Probable consequences of these value-goal patterns must be analyzed as objectively as possible.

We hope this presentation will contribute to these ends. Chapters by Nelson Foote, Harry Jaffa and Don Martindale provide the broad framework for viewing value and goal patterns of American society. Values and goals for economic organization of American society are viewed by Jesse Markham. John Brewster next deals with societal values and goals in respect to agriculture. This is followed by Olaf Larson's chapter on the goals and values of farm people, and Dale Hathaway's on goals for economic organization of agriculture. Goal conflicts associated with various agricultural programs as seen from the frame of reference of different groups of farm and nonfarm related persons are analyzed by Don Kaldor, Ward Bauder and Howard Hines. Ross Talbot focuses on the trends in the political position of agriculture.

The foregoing chapters are essentially analytical. Attention is shifted from the level of analysis to that of projection or inference in the remaining chapters. The first of this last group, by Kenneth Bachman and Ed Bishop, describes the structure of agriculture if it were made consistent with societal values and goals for economic organization. Lyle Shannon assesses the rates of change in agricultural production which may be tolerable in terms of their impact on the structure and functioning of other segments of our society and in terms of the value and goal orientation for the proper structure and functioning of family, community and national social systems. Farm policy programs which are acceptable in terms of the values of farm people are described by Lauren Soth. Finally, Boris Swerling and John Schnittker, using the preceding material as a base, attempt to formulate agricultural policy elements for the 1960's which are most consistent with the basic economic and social values for agriculture and for the total society. The various able discussants will "fill in the gaps" and extend the analyses in these general areas, with George Mehren tying them together in the final chapter.

The authors provide the frame of reference for discussion. One of the contributions, we hope, will be the stimulating and critical questions which will be raised by their presentations. Active participation by all persons in this field will contribute to providing a broad frame of reference for the direction of education, research and action programs related to the adjustment of agriculture in the 1960's.

**JAMES G. MADDOX**

North Carolina State College

## *Discussion*

AFTER SETTING forth the thesis that the major problems of farm policy are in the realm of goals and values, Professors Heady and Burchinal center their attention on three problems: (1) the sources of value and policy conflicts; (2) the level of generalization at which goals and values that will be acceptable to various sectors of society can be identified; and (3) the need for analysis, discussion and extension education as a basis for resolving conflicts among goals, values and policies.

Their effort is commendable. There has often been a disposition among agricultural economists to try to close their eyes to value problems. This tendency appears to stem from two sources:

(1) the fear economists have of being branded as unscientific or partisan, and (2) uncritical acceptance of the view that economists should limit their studies to alternative means of achieving predetermined ends. A corollary of the latter view is that the choice of ends should be left to such dubiously qualified people as philosophers, moralists, statesmen and run-of-the-mill politicians, or to that vaguely defined entity called "society." Heady and Burchinal provide a forceful argument for the agricultural economist to recognize goals and value judgments as a necessary part of the grist to be ground in his mill.

In the section pertaining to "Value and Policy Conflict" they make at least three instructive points. First, they contend that conflicts about farm policy arise mainly over intermediate goals, as distinguished from higher order or more ultimate goals, and over means by which goals can be achieved. Second, they point out that means and ends are not discrete, and that important problems arise in determining the mix, or combination, of goals which is optimum, desirable or acceptable. Third, they point out that "there is not one public but many publics, each with a different goal for, or special interest in, economic structure and policy for agriculture."

In a later section entitled "Perspective in American Society," where they examine some of the general patterns of values in American society and the relationship of these to values which pertain specifically to agriculture, they are, in effect, continuing their analysis of sources of conflict between values and policies. Here they point to the complications which have arisen because of: "(1) the rapid shift in relative demand for farm and nonfarm labor, with consequent changes in population and in the American social structure and (2) the increasing heterogeneity of the American society." As a result of the former, a new, highly commercialized and specialized agriculture is rapidly emerging, but changes in value judgments are lagging. We have a situation in which 18th and 19th century values are being applied to 20th century problems. The increasing heterogeneity of our social structure brings value conflicts between urban and rural sectors and between various groups, regional and economic, within agriculture.

All of the major points in these sections seem to me to be both valid and valuable. In a sense they are elementary, but they are also fundamental. Once we recognize the existence of numerous "publics," each with a combination of goals, no one of which is held to the exclusion of others, and each combination of which may in fact be means of attaining higher order goals, and once we recognize the numerous conflicts which arise from the

disparities between rates of change in values and rate of change in the technological and structural characteristics of society, the problem of resolving policy conflicts becomes extremely complicated. The ordinary procedure of the economist in choosing one fairly clear-cut goal and describing the conditions necessary for its maximization appears to be a rather puny effort alongside of the "real McCoy." Indirectly, therefore, the authors of this first chapter have humbled us, if not humiliated us, to the point where we should be eager to study the subsequent chapters. Hopefully, the latter will provide us with guides out of the forest.

When Professors Heady and Burchinal turn to a discussion of what I believe to be their second main problem, they appear to be less fruitful than in other parts of their discussion. In that section entitled "Levels of Generalized Values," they pose as important the question: "At what level of generalization can we identify goals or values which have broad acceptance by the diverse publics or sectors of society?" After discussing several types of goals, and various difficulties of resolving conflicts that are associated with each, they conclude: "... it is difficult to identify a level of generality in goals and values which might remove all conflicts in farm policies. If it were impossible to do so, we could throw up our hands and go home." They eschew this alternative, however, by asserting a faith that progress can be made. They buttress this position of optimism in two ways: first, by a few critical swipes at our tendency to use "patch up" policies and our failure to spell out "goals for policy and structure of agriculture with any specific content;" and second, by the prospect, or perhaps it is the hope, "that the farm problem will be recognized as one in goals and values, and education and communication will be developed accordingly."

All of this seems to me to be less than satisfactory. I may read into this discussion implications which are unwarranted, but this part of their chapter seems to be searching for a will-o'-the-wisp—for some kind of a magic, verbal statement of goals which "might remove all conflicts in farm policies." This is reminiscent of the Knights of the Round Table searching for the Holy Grail. I believe that the difficulty arises from an erroneous view of the policy-making process. Therefore, I want to suggest an alternative view to that which I think is implied by Professors Heady and Burchinal. In a very sketchy form it is as follows:

1. In the society in which we live conflicts about values, and hence about policies, are endemic, widespread, continuing and complex in origin.
2. They have to be resolved and re-resolved in a continuous

process of adjustment and redefinition of values, goals and policies.

3. With our pluralistic form of social organization, conflicts are commonly resolved by horse trading and bargaining, that is, by negotiation and renegotiation, the results of which are a continuing series of temporary armistices.
4. The principal negotiators are the officials of large organizations such as corporations, trade associations, labor unions, associations of farmers and government.
5. This process of bargaining is dynamic and continuing. Thus, there is a never-ending stream of temporary armistices issuing forth as results.
6. Government officials — legislators, administrators and jurists — play a double role in this process. They function both as negotiators and as command givers. They are, therefore, of key importance.
7. Some of the temporary armistices may develop into permanent peace treaties. To the extent that this occurs, it is likely to be discovered by the historian several years after the fact.
8. When a cluster of these temporary armistices about issues which significantly alter the allocation of power among various groups and classes in society crystallize into permanent peace treaties within a relatively few years, we have one of those rare "watersheds" or "turning points" in history. We often call these "revolutions."

With this sketch of a conceptual model before us, we ask: What is the role of the social scientist in resolving policy conflicts? I am by no means sure that I know the answer, but I do not believe that it is to search for some idealized level of generalization in the statement of goals and values which is supposed to remove policy conflicts. A more fruitful endeavor, I suggest, is to explore the characteristics of the processes which both originate and resolve conflicts about particular goals, values and policies, and from such explorations to accumulate knowledge which will enable him to suggest specific social techniques that will aid in bringing about temporary armistices.

Let me try to illustrate how this general line of thinking might be applied to a specific policy problem. One of the important present conflicts revolves around the extent to which national bargaining versus free market prices is to be used as a mechanism for pricing farm products and allocating agricultural

resources to different uses. Former Secretary of Agriculture Benson, many businessmen and the top officials of one of the farm organizations are on the side of the free market mechanism. A good many important legislators and the officials of other farm organizations view national bargaining, at least for some farm products, in a very favorable light. Other people, including not a few agricultural economists, are on one side or the other. Various and sundry types of arguments are used in support of each view. For several years, progress toward an armistice has been blocked mainly because the pertinent leaders of the legislative and executive branches of government are on opposite sides of the issue. While the bargaining goes on, the farm income situation worsens, and the growing size of the surplus stockpile brings embarrassment to all of us.

Faced with this situation, what should the agricultural economist do? Clearly, we must permit him to write papers and read them before his colleagues. If we deny him this opportunity, he will come apart at the seams and the profession will disappear. I suggest two broad, and admittedly rather vague, areas in which he might fruitfully exercise his paper-writing predilections.

First, the nature of the problem needs to be sharply defined so that the principal negotiators can bargain about common issues. As a first step in this direction, I suggest that the problem pertains mainly to the delegation of authority. It can be stated as follows: To what extent should the citizens of this country delegate the authority to price farm products to individual producers, consumers and traders in market places, and to what extent should they delegate this authority to organized groups and to government?

Other people may see the problem from different perspectives, and have other definitions. But, at least, here is an area which needs further exploration by the social scientists. We need to educate the negotiators to visualize clearly what they are bargaining about. I suspect that they are now bargaining about two quite different issues, each of which is based in different sets of traditional values. Those who support national bargaining as a substitute for free market pricing appear to do so on the ground that it is a mechanism for putting farmers in a position of greater equality with other groups in society. Their goal is equality of pricing power for farmers. A good deal of their argument, however, runs in terms of the level at which farm products should be priced. The opponents of national bargaining on the other hand, are not apparently really concerned about the level of prices. They fear the reallocation of power in society, especially the role which government would play, if national bargaining were

substituted for free market pricing. The values on which their views are based are essentially those associated with the concept of laissez faire.

After the nature of the problem is clarified, and bargainers are in this way encouraged to negotiate about common issues, the second major area in which the social scientist can contribute is to outline the forms of organization and the principles of action which are consistent with each of the alternative pricing mechanisms. Agricultural economists have done considerable work which is relevant to questions of consistency. There is, however, much unworked ground. I will mention only two examples. First, too little attention has been given to the kinds of authority which should be delegated to the executive branch, if government organization is to be consistent with national bargaining as a pricing mechanism. Likewise, too little attention has been given to questions of how the two types of pricing mechanisms, and the level and degree of stability in prices which is likely to be associated with each, will probably affect different sizes and types of farms in various regions. These are but two examples. I am sure that many more questions of consistency merit the analytical attention of social scientists.

In the preceding paragraphs I have tried to sketch out a view about the policy-making process, and to offer a few tentative suggestions about the way in which social scientists can make a contribution to understanding, and hence resolving, policy conflicts. I was moved to attempt this because I felt that Professors Heady and Burchinal were on the wrong track in trying to identify a level of generalization in the statement of goals and values which would eliminate policy conflicts. In my view, we will never eliminate policy conflicts in any meaningful sense of that term. However, I see much valuable work which the social scientist can perform in helping the participants in the policy-making process move from temporary armistice to temporary armistice. This may not be an appealing role to many agricultural economists. I only suggest that those who insist on finding an ultimate solution ask themselves if they haven't defined their problem incorrectly.