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THE ATTITUDES AND POLICIES OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION TOWARD AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

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THE ATTITUDES AND POLICIES OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION TOWARD AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

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THE ATTITUDES AND POLICIES OF THE THEODORE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION TOWARD AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

CHAPTER I -

THE GOLDEN AGE OF AGRICULTURE

The years between the conclusion of the Spanish-American War and American entrance into World War I have been labeled by historians as the "Golden Age of Agriculture." During these years the American farmer enjoyed relative prosperity and found a new economic security. The twentieth century agrarian seemed to accept the fact that he was living in an expanding urban-industrial world and that he could no longer "beat back" the advances of an industrial economy and society. These years offered a sharp contrast to the decade prior to the war with Spain when rural America suffered from economic distress and seethed with political unrest.

The basis of agricultural difficulty lay in the declining position of agriculture in relation to industry. The farm rebellion of the seventies, eighties, and nineties was largely a reaction against the economic power of industrial America. Within the generation following the Civil War, the

United States was transformed from an agricultural nation with rural attitudes to an industrial nation with a growing urban outlook. It was this process of adjustment to these new economic conditions that gave rise to the agrarian protest.[1]

The economic and political grievances which confronted the farmer before the Spanish-American War accumulated in proportion to the rise of industry. As the western farmer invested in improved machinery and increased production, his prosperity declined. Between 1870 and 1900 American farm acreage increased from 407,000,000 to 838,000,000, while investments in machinery and implements tripled, and the use of commercial fertilizer multiplied eight times.[2] The result of this absolute growth was an imbalance of supply and demand. This was the heart of the agricultural problem.

In conformance with the laws of economics, the price of farm products declined as supply outran demand. Professor

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[1]For traditional treatments of the Populist Movement and Era see: Samuel P. Hays, The Response to Industrialism, 1885-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Grant McConnell, The Decline of Agrarian Democracy (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1959); Fred A. Shannon, The Farmer's Last Frontier (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1945); and John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1931). Two new studies on Populism are Walter R. K. Nugent, The Tolerant Populists, Kansas Populism and Nativism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963); and Norman Pollack, The Populist Response to Industrial America, Midwestern Populist Thought (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).

[2]Shannon, Farmer's Last Frontier, 154-161.

Joseph Snider's wholesale commodity index indicated a fall from 204 in 1866 to 88 in 1891;[3] prices of goods purchased by the farmer did not decline by such a large percentage. "The divergence between farm and general prices," declared historian Fred A. Shannon, "was in itself enough to cause distress."[4]

There were, however, other factors which added to the mounting troubles of the farmer. Farmers in the West complained that it cost as much to transport a bushel of wheat as it did to grow it. A Department of Agriculture study indicated that ton-mile railroad freight rates of the Burlington line in 1877 ran four times higher west of the Missouri than east of it, while by 1888 it was twice as much.[5] It was railroad policy to charge extra high rates in monopoly areas. The rate for wheat from Fargo to Duluth, on the Northern Pacific, was sometimes twice that from St. Paul to Chicago, although the St. Paul-Chicago distance was twice the mileage between Duluth and Fargo. Not only did the railroads control the transportation of farm produce, but they also set the price of storage and often controlled the

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[3]Joseph L. Snider, "Wholesale Prices in the United States, 1866-1894," Review of Economic Statistics, VI (April, 1924), 112.

[4]Shannon, Farmer's Last Frontier, 295.

[5]H. T. Newcomb and Edward G. Ward, Changes in the Rates of Charge for Railway and Other Transportation Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bulletin No. 15, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 21-23, 25-26. See also, Hicks, Populist Revolt, 61-67.

elevators which classified the grain. These were causes of bitter agrarian complaint.

In the monetary field, the farmer fared no better. Republican attempts to tighten the money supply were injurious to the farmer's position. The demonetization of silver and the calling in of the greenbacks reduced the per-capita money supply from $30 to $20 in the five years after the Civil War. This made the farmer's position more severe if he were in debt. From 1865 to 1869 farm debt appreciated 35.2 per cent in terms of dollar purchasing power, while from 1870 to 1890 the average annual appreciation of this debt was 2.5 per cent.[6]

The western farmer found himself at a great disadvantage in the money market. He was forced to mortgage his property in return for a loan in order to expand, improve or just maintain his farm. The interest rates raised from around 8 per cent on real estate loans to an exhorbitant 25 per cent on chattel mortgages. In Kansas alone 11,000 farms were lost by mortgage foreclosure from 1889 to 1893. It has been estimated that in many western states there were more mortgages than families.[7]

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[6]Hicks, Populist Revolt, 90-91.

[7]The best discussions of the monetary problem of the farmer are found in Shannon, Farmer's Last Frontier, 303-309; Hicks, Populist Revolt, 96-104; and Allan Bogue, Money at Interest, the Farm Mortgage on the Middle Border (Ithica, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1955).

The Southern farmer was worse off than his Western counterpart. In the South, the share-crop system and crop-lien financing plunged the majority of farmers into perpetual economic bondage. The decline in cotton prices from 1877 to 1897 was greater than that of corn or wheat. Cotton fell as low as 5.8 cents per pound, when 8 cents was considered necessary for a profit.[8]

There is no doubt that the farmers of America had legitimate complaints. Basic to these grievances, however, was a feeling of insecurity that arose out of the farmer's belief that his way of life was doomed. It was this fear of decline of stature that made him ready to revolt against the rising tide of industrialism.

A sustained effort to build an effective farm organization dominated the years of agrarian revolt. The first nationwide movement was the Grange, organized in 1867 by Oliver Kelley. While investigating Southern farm conditions, Kelley was impressed with the lack of spirit among agricultural classes. He established a National Grange which had as its aim the improvement of farm methods and farm life.

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[8]The economic conditions in the South and the Southern agrarian protest movements are discussed in A. M. Arnett, The Populist Movement in Georgia (New York: n.p. 1922); Frances Simkins, The Tillman Movement in South Carolina (Durham: Duke University Press, 1926); C. Vann Wooward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel (New York: Macmillan Co., 1938); Theodore Salovtos, Farmer Movements in the South, 1865-1933 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960).

Moving into an anti-railroad and anti-monopoly approach, the Grangers were successful in establishing state regulation of the railroads and in setting up co-operative enterprises. By the late 1870's, however, Granger business attempts had failed, and their political importance had declined.[9]

But newer farm organizations known as Farmer's Alliances continued to support co-operative efforts and to urge radical political action. When a drouth in the upper Mississippi River Valley in 1881 reduced the yield of wheat 22 per cent and of corn 32 per cent, many farmers joined the Alliances with enthusiasm. By 1889, Kansas alone had 130,000 members, and in 1885 Texas membership reached 50,000.[10]

The late 1880's witnessed the collapse of the speculative land boom. Foreclosures reached all-time highs, and wheat prices fell from 82 cents per bushel in 1888 to 55 cents in 1892. These conditions stimulated the Alliances into promulgating similar political action programs which called for government ownership of railroads, free coinage of silver, abolition of national banks, along with political reforms. Spurred on by success in the 1890 state elections, the Alliancemen in 1892 moved into the national political

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[9]See, Solon J. Buck, The Granger Movement (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913).

[10]Hicks, Populist Revolt, 104-113. See also, H. R. Chamberlain, The Farmers Alliances: What It Aims to Accomplish (New York: Minerva Publishing Company, 1891).

arena.[11] The Populist Party emerged in the election of 1892 as the champion of the debtor-farmer class. Although the Populists gained only 22 electoral votes in 1892, the Democrats took up the issue of free silver and inflation in 1896. The economic position of the farmer reached a nadir after the depression of 1893, and, therefore, many found satisfaction in the choice of William Jennings Bryan and his championing of inflation.

With the defeat of Bryan in the election of 1896 and the coming of the Spanish-American War, the cries of the American farmers were soon inaudible among the shouts "Remember the Maine" and "There'll be a hot time in the old town tonight." As the old century died, so did the agrarian protest movement.

In contrast to the years of agrarian discontent and unrest before the Spanish-American War, the years prior to World War I witnessed no full scale farm rebellion against the new industrial order. Although, as in every age, there were some rumblings of dissatisfaction among the tillers of the soil, there were no Mary Leases urging the farmers to "Raise less corn and more hell" until after the appearance

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[11]Solon J. Buck, The Agrarian Crusade (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), 111-131; Hallie Farmer, "The Economic Background of Frontier Populism," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, X (March, 1924), 406-427; Hicks, Populist Revolt, 427-430.

of A. C. Townley and the Nonpartisan League in 1915.[12] These were golden years for the American farm population--an era of prosperity and optimism in which the farmer seemed to find a new security and economic opportunity.

An Iowa corn carnival orator expressed the sentiment of the American farm community at the turn of the century when he declared: "From the beginning of Indiana to the end of Nebraska there is nothing but corn, cattle, and contentment."[13] In the same vein the editor of the Twentieth Century Farmer reflected this new spirit of well-being when in 1902 he declared:

> We are living in the golden age of the great republic because of its unexampled commercial prosperity, industrial activity and agricultural wealth. The farmers of America will coin more gold this fall . . . out of the products of the soil than has ever been coined by all the mints of the United States, England, Germany, and France in any single year.[14]

The Rocky Mountain Husbandman likewise sounded an optimistic note when its editor proclaimed that "the country home is the one place on earth that is free from sleepless nights

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[12]For the best published study of the activities of the Nonpartisan League, see Robert L. Morland, Political Prairie Fire, the Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955). Two less vocal Farm Movements that began during the Roosevelt era were The American Society of Equity and the Farmers' Union.

[13]Earle D. Ross, Iowa Agriculture, An Historical Survey (Iowa City, Iowa: The State Historical Society, 1951), 118.

[14]Twentieth Century Farmer (Omaha), August 27, 1902.

due to financial troubles."[15] In 1909 Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson observed that "the value of farm products is so incomprehensibly large that it has become merely a row of figures."[16] That same year President Roosevelt's Country Life Commission reported that "there has never been a time when the American farmer was as well off as he is today."[17]

The return of agricultural prosperity caused the president of the New York Central Railroad to predict that "the farmer has come into his own, and his prosperity will increase with the years . . . . Supply will never again catch up with demand."[18] Even Secretary Wilson believed that it would not be long until all American farm produce would be consumed at home.[19] According to one agricultural historian, with the renewal of farm prosperity, those who complained of their lot were regarded simply as "anachronistic calamity howlers."[20]

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[15]Quoted in Twentieth Century Farmer, September 7, 1904.

[16]Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture, 1909 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1910), 9. Hereafter cited as Yearbook.

[17]The complete story of the Country Life Commission is told in Chapters VI and VII.

[18]Quoted in Ross, Iowa Agriculture, 120.

[19]Wilson to F. H. La Baume, June 11, 1908, Papers to the Secretary of Agriculture, Record Group 16, U. S. Department of Agriculture, National Archives. Hereafter cited as Papers of the Secretary.

[20]Ross, Iowa Agriculture, 118.

After nearly a generation of farm distress, what had brought about this revival of agrarian well-being? What had happened to the economic status of American agriculture that caused the president of the New York Central Railroad and the Secretary of Agriculture to make such surprisingly optimistic prophecies?

On the surface the answer to these questions seems to be a relatively simple one. Good crop yields were accompanied by good prices; land values increased rapidly; the prices the farmer received for his goods remained in a favorable position to the prices he paid for manufactured articles. Behind these general descriptive statements, however, rests a complex economic chain of cause and effect.

As has been mentioned earlier, the economic difficulty which confronted the farmer of the 1880's or 1890's was due to the unfavorable balance between production and consumption. Agriculture expanded so rapidly and production figures increased so quickly, that supply soon outstripped demand. As the westward march of Americans continued throughout the years prior to the Spanish-American War, more and more land came under cultivation. The twenty year period between 1870 and 1890 saw the number of farms in the United States double; improved acreage jumped from 189,000,000 to 358,000,000.[21] The tremendous rise in

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[21] Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1910 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1911), 119-125; Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1920 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1921,) 133-141.

productive farm land resulted in an equal increase in production. In 1866 American farmers grew 152,000,000 bushels of wheat, while by 1897 this figure had more than tripled to 530,149,000.[22] During these same years, corn production jumped twofold, tons of hay harvested almost tripled, and cattle and swine numbers doubled.[23]

This rapid increase in settlement and production, however, spelled economic disaster for the farmer. Americans were not able to consume the increased products of the field, and foreign markets were not sufficient to take the surpluses at good prices. The drop in farm prices is reflected in the chief cash crops of wheat and cotton. The 1866 crop of wheat--152,000,000--brought $1.53 a bushel and was valued at $232,110,000 while the 456,000,000 bushel crop of 1887 was worth $310,000,000, or only 68 cents a bushel. By 1894 the price had declined to less than 50 cents.[24] Cotton prices reflected the same trend. During the 1890's the cotton grower rarely received over 7 cents per pound, while throughout the 1870's he sold for more than 10 cents per pound.[25] Other commodities followed this general pattern. Agriculture prior to the Spanish-American War had overextended itself.

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[22]Yearbook, 1917, 614-615.

[23]Ibid., 606-607; 722; 665; 743.

[24]Ibid., 614-615.

[25]Ibid. 1899, 797.

During the period between the war with Spain and the First World War, however, conditions changed. The unbridled expansion of the agricultural frontier came to an end. Between 1900 and 1920 the number of American farms increased very little, from 5,737,372 to 6,448,343, a vivid contrast to the twenty year period between 1870 and 1890.[26] The improved acreage figures indicate the same trend. Whereas between 1870 and 1890 Americans brought almost 200,000,000 acres of generally rich and productive land into use, during the period between the wars, less than 100,000,000 acres of less productive land was broken by the farmer's plow or grazed by the rancher's stock. Much of the territory settled after 1890 was marginal agricultural land which did not proportionally increase production.[27]

Just as the expansion of the farmers' frontier was accompanied by parallel production gains, the abrupt end of expansion caused by the "closing of the frontier" brought a period of relative stability to agricultural production. From 1866 to 1897, wheat production had more than tripled. Between 1897 and 1917, however, the rate of wheat production declined, showing only a modest rise from 530,000,000 to 638,000,000 bushels.[28] During the same period, corn

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[26]Statistical Abstract, 1910, 119-125; Statistical Abstract, 1920, 133-141.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Yearbook, 1917, 614-615.

production increased less than 300,000 bushels, from 2,284,000 to 2,566,000.[29] The cattle and swine industries followed a similar pattern of tremendous expansion before 1897 and limited growth after 1897.[30] With the exception of new farm industries such as rice, citrus fruit, and vegetables, after 1897 agricultural production came more into line with consumer demands. This situation was at the heart of the new prosperity.

Coupled with this leveling off of production was an increase in consumer demand for products of the field and barn. Industrialization brought urbanization; the industry of America lured European immigrants to its cities. Between 1900 and 1910, rural population increased only 11 per cent, while that of the city grew 39 per cent.[31] The following decade, 1910 to 1920, witnessed an urban population growth of 35 per cent, while farm population gained only 5 per cent.[32] Those employed in agriculture dwindled in the total work force of the nation. By 1900, 37.5 per cent of employed Americans were laboring on the farm, and by 1920 this

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[29] Ibid., 606-607.

[30] Ibid., 722, 743.

[31] Pascal K. Whelpton, "Occupational Groups in the United States, 1820-1920," Journal of the American Statistical Association, XXI (September, 1926), 335-343.

[32] Ibid.

percentage had dropped to 27 per cent.[33]

Between 1890 and 1900 many urban areas witnessed fantastic growth. The population of Chicago increased almost 55 per cent, while New York jumped 37 per cent. Other city populations multiplied as follows: Cleveland, 46 per cent; Duluth, 60 per cent: Kansas City, 34 per cent; Los Angeles, 103 per cent. The decade from 1900 to 1910 tells the same story; New York City increased 38 per cent; Schenectady, 130 per cent; Birmingham, 245 per cent; Dallas, 116 per cent; Los Angeles, 211 per cent; Cleveland, 47 per cent; and Atlanta, 72 per cent.[34] Because of swollen populations, the American city now demanded more products from the farm.

It was this expanded domestic market rather than increased exports that enabled farm production to catch up with demand. Although between 1901 and 1914 the total value of agricultural exports increased from $951,628,000 to $1,113,974, the actual percentage of American crops that found their way to foreign ports decreased. From 1880 to 1900, the United States exported yearly between 25 and 40

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[33]Harold Barger and Hans H. Landsberg, American Agriculture, 1899-1939, A Study in Output, Employment, and Productivity (New York: National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., 1942), 291-316.

[34]Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1911 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1912), 55-56.

per cent of the wheat crop. Between 1900 and 1916, however, the wheat export percentage ranged from only 10 to 20 per cent, a sizeable decrease.[35] Except for tobacco, cotton, and fruit, the volume of farm exports by 1910 was down to pre-1880 levels.[36] Increased demand for agricultural produce came principally from American cities, not foreign countries.

In commenting upon the relation between industrial growth and agricultural well-being during the depression of the 1930's, economist Theodore Schultz states that "the failure of industrial output to expand . . . was the basic factor in the worsening of the agricultural situation."[37] Just as during the age of Franklin Roosevelt lack of industrial growth was responsible for "worsening" the farm depression, earlier during the Theodore Roosevelt era, rapid industrial development improved and stimulated the agricultural segment of the economy. Between 1895 and World War I, industry expanded at a rate three times that of agriculture. The following table shows the comparative growth of industry and agriculture.

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[35] Yearbook, 1919, 698-702; Yearbook, 1917, 614-615.

[36] Edwin C. Nourse, American Agriculture and the European Market (New York: McGraw-Hill Co., 1924), 38; Harold U. Faulkner, The Decline of Laissez Faire, 1897-1917 (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1951), 337.

[37] Theodore W. Schultz, Agriculture in an Unstable Economy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1945), 113.

Table 1

INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION, 1895-1915[a]

1895=100

Year	Industrial Production	Agricultural Production
1895	100	100
1900	120	119
1905	174	130
1910	198	132
1915	256	150

a Derived from: Theodore W. Schultz, Agriculture in an Unstable Economy (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1945), 115.

Industrial growth coupled with rapid urbanization absorbed most of the food and fiber produced on farms at good prices. This was the basis for the agrarian economic renaissance of the pre-World War I years.

The census of 1910 points out that during the previous decade, land prices increased by 118.1 per cent in the United States.[38] The advance was even greater in some of the Midwestern farm states: Iowa, 123.0; Kansas, 189.0; Nebraska, 231.8; North Dakota, 321.3; and South Dakota, 367.1 per cent. Iowa farms that had sold for $20.00 an acre during

[38] U. S., Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the United States: 1910, V, 28, 79.

the 1880's sold for $100.00 in 1908.[39] Mortgages that were chains around the necks of farmers before 1897 seemed negligible in 1910. As one scholar of American agriculture points out, "Whether he realized it or not, the average . . . land holder had made money not so much from good farming as from unearned increment."[40] The American farmer had been a successful speculator.

Rising prices for agricultural commodities accompanied this boom in land values. The Secretary of Agriculture explained in his 1910 report that if the year 1899 was regarded as 100, the value of farm products had climbed as follows: 1900, 106.4; 1905, 133.0; 1908, 167.3; and 1910, 189.2.[41] Crop and livestock produce in 1899 was worth $4,717,000,000, while by the time America entered the First World War this figure had jumped to $19,331,000,000.[42]

Specific commodity prices reflect this rapid growth in dollar value. From 1867 to 1897, swine prices per hundred fluctuated between $4.00 and $4.75--usually closer to the $4.00 level. By 1901 the price had increased to $6.20

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[39]Theodore Salutos and John D. Hicks, Agricultural Discontent in the Middle West (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), 23; see also Hicks, "The Western Middle West, 1900-1914," Agricultural History, XX (April, 1946), 65-77.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Yearbook, 1910, 10.

[42]Arthur F. Burns, Production Trends in the United States Since 1870 (New York: Bureau of Economic Research, 1934), 263.

and by 1910 had jumped to $1.17.[43] Milch cow prices had ranged between $20.00 and $30.00 during the years before 1900. In 1910, milch cows brought $35.39 at the market and by 1915, the price had risen to $55.33.[44] Grain prices indicated similar increases. Typical corn prices during the years prior to 1897 ran from 20 to 40 cents, while between 1900 and 1913, corn sold at 40 to 70 cents.[45] Wheat prices gradually rose after 1900 reaching 99 cents per bushel in 1908. Increased production per acre, however, retarded any appreciable gains from 1908 to American entry into the war.[46]

The important factor, however, in the good times which the farmer enjoyed after 1897 was the relationship between farm and non-farm prices. During these years, the prices the farmer received for his produce went up more rapidly than non-farm prices. The following table shows the relationship between wholesale farm and non-farm prices from 1890 to 1914.

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[43] Yearbook, 1917, 743.

[44] Ibid., 722.

[45] Ibid., 606-607.

[46] Ibid., 614-615. Other crop prices followed similar patterns. Oats, which during the 1890's brought from 18 to 30 cents per bushel, sold for 44 cents in 1907 and 47 cents in 1909. Barley prices which ranged from 30 to 50 cents per bushel during the 1890's reached 67 cents in 1907 and 86 cents in 1911. Potato prices jumped from 26 cents in 1895 to 70 cents in 1907 and 80 cents in 1911.

Table 2

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FARM AND NON-FARM WHOLESALE PRICES BETWEEN 1890 AND 1914[b]

1926=100

Year	Farm Produce	Textiles	Building Material	Metal & Implements	Home Furnishings	All Goods
1890	50.4	57.8	46.5	105.3	49.9	56.2
1892	49.5	55.2	41.7	84.0	48.1	52.2
1894	44.6	46.1	39.8	65.7	45.3	47.9
1896	39.6	43.1	38.9	71.2	43.4	46.5
1898	44.9	44.9	39.6	65.3	45.0	48.5
1900	50.5	53.3	46.2	98.0	48.9	56.1
1902	58.4	49.4	54.3	91.0	49.2	58.9
1904	58.5	52.9	45.0	79.9	50.3	59.7
1906	57.3	58.7	54.0	102.4	51.3	61.8
1908	62.2	54.8	52.0	86.3	51.6	62.9
1909	69.6	56.5	53.7	84.5	51.7	67.6
1910	74.3	55.5	55.3	80.3	52.7	70.4
1912	72.6	55.7	55.9	89.5	53.0	69.1
1914	71.2	54.6	52.7	80.2	56.8	68.1

b Derived from: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1930 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1930), 322.

A study of the relationship between farm and non-farm prices indicates that during the 1890's the farmer stood at a considerable disadvantage in the market place. Only in comparison to building material prices did agricultural prices show a favorable position. By 1902, however, farm prices gained a favorable relationship to those of textile and home furnishings. By 1908 farm prices gained equity with most manufactured goods. After 1908 the "farm produce" column shows an advantage over the "all goods"

column. From 1908 until World War I wholesale farm prices remained above the general wholesale price level. This spelled economic well-being for the man on the farm; good prices, good yields, and a favorable price relationship between farm and non-farm goods were the real bases for the golden age of agriculture.

At the same time that American farmers were enjoying the fruits of the "good years," the United States witnessed the development of a new agrarian spirit--the "new agriculture." This expressive term included an emphasis upon the scientific approach to agriculture, the recognition of education as important to successful farming, and the development of a new public image of American farming. One scholar of American agricultural history has written that the "new agriculture" signified that "agriculture had passed from pioneer existence to modernized economy and living."[47] In other words, the "new agriculture" represented the modernization of American farming.

Basic to the concept of the "new agriculture" was the changing image which writers, and even some farmers, presented to the American public. The old image of farming depicted the agrarian life as one draped with hardship, continual economic disadvantage, and privations. This view pictured the farmer with hayseed in his hair, his face drawn

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[47]Ross, Iowa Agriculture, 118.

and clothes tattered, a pitchfork in his hand ready to ward off bankers, middlemen, and railroaders. Just as this old image was based upon the writings of those who, like Hamlin Garland, viewed farming as a drab, harsh, unrewarding way of life, the new image which now pictured farming as a vital, prosperous, and honorable vocation, found its basis in the writings of men like Walter Hines Page of World's Work[48] and W. S. Harwood, author of The New Earth.

After 1900 many articles and books glorifying agriculture began to appear. T. Bayard Collin's The New Agriculture, Kenyon Butterfield's The Farmer and New Day, E. Benjamin Andrews' The Call of the Land, E. P. Powell's How to Live in the Country, and Harwood's The New Earth all spoke in terms of the "homestead beautiful" and "happy life on the farm."[49]

One of the most literary and colorful leaders in the attack on the "old image" was W. S. Harwood. Writing in 1906 he described the "old agriculture" of the 1870's, 1880's and 1890's in the following descriptive manner:

> Dust-blown and blizzard swept, with a lean, weed-grown soil on which scrawny kine and stunted crops

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[48]See World's Work, VI (August, 1903), 3766-3779.

[49]T. Bayard Collins, The New Agriculture (New York: Munn and Co., 1906); William Harwood, The New Earth (New York: Macmillan Co., 1906); E. Benjamin Andrews, The Call of the Land (New York: Orange Judd Co., 1913); E. P. Powell, How to Live in the Country (New York: Outing Publishing Co., 1911).

> were raised, the Old Earth was far from paradise. The cheerless, desolate home, often untidy and usually cursed with food unfit to eat, the ever-growing mountain of debt, the deadening isolation, the lack of opportunity for cultivation, the steadily growing dislike for it all, not infrequently deepening into hate,--these were the things of the Old Earth.[50]

In contrast to this dismal appraisal of late nineteenth century American farming, Harwood painted a scenic and optimistic picture of the "new agriculture":

> The New Earth is rising out of the Old--a fine sane resurrection. Broad acres, well kept and well stocked; splendidly equipped buildings; a modern home with its good cheer, its books, its music, its culture; a close touch with progress; a balance in the bank; the pride of strong men and sensible women in a calling as old as the human race, but never until now come into its own,--these are the tokens of the New Earth.[51]

In the same line of thought, E. P. Powell in his How to Live in the Country declared that, "the newer day is surely coming in . . . . It will not recall the old, not to any fullness, but the coming country life will be very full of fine arts, that will reawaken content with country living . . . ."[52] Author Powell recognized the new role of science in agriculture when he related that

> About 1890 the agricultural colleges had begun to bring country work into alliance with science. All the accumulating knowledge of the world was about to be laid down at the door of the farmer. With

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[50]Harwood, The New Earth, 1.

[51]Ibid., 1-2.

[52]Powell, How to Live in the Country, 239.

> the experiment stations bulletins were issued freely to be distributed, bringing to the front those economic questions which can only be settled by cooperation. New fruits and new flowers began to enrich rural life, and men like Burbank stood in the place of those heroes who had previously occupied public attention.[53]

Although neither the condition nor image of agriculture changed as rapidly or completely as this literature suggested, these writers were the promoters of the "new image" and the "new agriculture." Many publishers reprinted the works of the "new image" writers; the American public seemed to read them with interest and more than likely came to accept the ideas of the "new agriculture."[54]

The old image of American farming was, therefore, being replaced by one which looked at agriculture as an honorable, if not romantic, calling. Although writers such as Collins, Powell, or Harwood were just as guilty of exaggerating the glories of the American farm as earlier journalists had been in overstating its drabness and drawbacks, certainly agriculture was changing. And just as writers and observers noted this change--gradual though it was--so did the farmer himself. Farmers were beginning to view them-

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[53] Ibid., 282.

[54] The author of this study purchased from a city dweller a book collection which contained most of these "new image" writers. The books contained heavy underlining and marginal comments. Here is an example of one urbanite who carefully read and analyzed this literature. His comments such as "True!" or "Right!" that appear in the margins would lead one to believe that he had accepted the "new image" of American farming without reservation.

selves and their vocation in a different light. As the century turned, American agrarians were becoming more conscious of the importance of scientific and educational ideas for farming.

The use of scientific principles began to replace empirical procedures on a larger scale. The application of science to agriculture, according to T. Bayard Collins, was the basis of the "new agriculture." He admonished the farmer to listen to the botanist, the chemist, and the entomologist. "The new light from science," proclaimed Collins, "instead of detracting from the romance and mystery that inhere in . . . nature, simply give to the farmer that degree of authority and control which make for highest profit and pleasure."[55]

Through the efforts of the Department of Agriculture, the federal government began to play a larger role in transmitting useful scientific knowledge to the farmer. President Theodore Roosevelt expressed his concern for the "new agriculture" when he asserted that "we must welcome the rise of physical sciences in their application to agricultural practices."[56] In the same vein of thought, the Secretary of the Department of Agriculture James Wilson believed that science was the key that would unlock the door to a new agriculture. According to Wilson, the farmer "needs more than the experi-

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[55]Collins, New Agriculture, 97.

[56]Theodore Roosevelt to Giles Stillwell, September 28, 1907, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress. Hereafter cited as Roosevelt Papers.

ence of a life time which he might get from his father; he needs to know what has been discovered with regards to the sciences that relate to agriculture."[57]

Through demonstrations, printed bulletins, and institutes, after 1897 the Department of Agriculture bombarded the rural population with practical scientific knowledge which would improve American agriculture and the position of the farmer. Never before had the farmer had the opportunities to use the findings of science to such great advantage. And the farmer responded. In 1903 almost 1,000,000 farmers attended over 3,000 farm institutes, and in 1910 over 5,000 institutes were held with an attendence of over 2,500,000 farmers.[58] More than 13,000,000 people attended the farm demonstrations and displays at the St. Louis World Fair,[59] while corn exhibits in Omaha drew 10,000 farmers daily in 1909.[60]

The Nebraska Farmer recognized this increased farm interest in modern agricultural education and techniques when it observed that the past years,

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[57]James Wilson to J. B. Weems, September 26, 1901, Papers of the Secretary.

[58]United States Department of Agriculture, Annual Report of the Office of Experiment Stations, 1909 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1910), 50.

[59]Twentieth Century Farmer, January 11, 1905.

[60]Annual Report of the Office of Experiment Stations, 1909, 277-280. The complete story of the role of the U.S.D.A. in the education of the farmer is told in Chapter IX.

> have been notable for one thing, viz., and awakening of farmers to the necessity of becoming educated in their business. This awakening has found expression in the creation of the farmers' institute system, the agricultural experiment stations, the agricultural college, and the remarkable development of agricultural literature.[61]

The new agrarian attitude was also reflected by the editor of the Iowa Agriculturalist when he wrote in 1902:

> The prejudice against what was formerly styled "book farming" has died out and not without good reason. During recent years in open competition the experiment stations have demonstrated their ability to put theory into practice, and by this means have won the confidence of the practical men.[62]

The farmer was coming to realize that science was the key to better and more prosperous farming, and that "book farming" had value to the practical man.

So then, just as Theodore Roosevelt himself represented national political change to many people, his era witnessed changes in the nature and condition of American agriculture. Two basic developments dominated the "golden age," the return of farm prosperity and the rise of the "new agriculture." For the first time since the Civil War, farmers were enjoying the fruits of their labor in a new found prosperity. The end of agricultural expansion and the rapid growth of industry and city populations brought farm supply into line with urban demand. Good prices and a favorable relationship between farm and non-farm prices resulted in good times for the country dweller.

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[61] The Nebraska Farmer, XXXVI (March 2, 1904), 220.

[62] Quoted in Ross, Iowa Agriculture, 123.

This age of prosperity was paralleled by the development of a new agrarian spirit. The "new agriculture" championed the scientific and educational approach to farming. It also presented a new view of farming as a vocation. The old image of the farmer--a hayseed who repulsed progressive farming--was being replaced by one which depicted farming as an honorable vocation and the farmer as a more scientific and businesslike man.

These were the characteristics that describe American agriculture in the age of Theodore Roosevelt. Just as the nation was finding new avenues of change under this active President, so was agriculture. The basic question asked by this study is, what was the relationship between agriculture and government in this age of expanding governmental functions? What were the attitudes and policies of Theodore Roosevelt and his administration toward American farming?

CHAPTER II

THEODORE ROOSEVELT AND AMERICAN AGRICULTURE

Theodore Roosevelt came to the presidency as a member of New York City's upper class society. He was born into a prominent family of inherited wealth, and, unlike most of his predecessors in the White House, attended exclusive Eastern schools. Roosevelt had traveled in Europe and held a deep interest in a variety of subjects such as natural science, naval history, and French literature. At an early age he expressed the wish to become a naturalist such as Audubon; he read much of the world's great literature in its original language. Professor George Mowry aptly points out that one has "to go back about a century to John Quincy Adams to find someone near his kind."[1]

And, except for his sojourns into the ranch country of Dakota, Roosevelt's career was exclusively urban centered. The lower house of the New York state legislature was Roosevelt's first arena of politics. After serving three terms as New York Assemblyman, he ran unsucessfully for mayor

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[1]George Mowry, The Era of Theodore Roosevelt (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), 107.

of New York City. In 1889 at the age of thirty-one, he was appointed to the United States Civil Service Commission where he served for six years.

In 1895 Roosevelt became president of the New York City Police Board. After two "news-making" years in this position, Roosevelt became Assistant Secretary of the Navy under President William McKinley. Following his flamboyant experience as a leader of the "Rough Riders" in the Spanish-American War, he emerged as a popular national hero. Aided by his war reputation, he was elected to the governorship of New York in 1898.[2]

It is evident that Roosevelt's public life brought him into contact mostly with urban conditions and problems. His relationships with rural American life were very limited. The "farmers" with whom he associated were Eastern country gentlemen upon whose "farms" Roosevelt enjoyed hunting and fishing. These were men of "cultivated taste and easy life."[3] Even his years in cattle ranching did not show him rural America. He viewed his Western years as romantic adventure rather than agricultural endeavor. Although while in Dakota Roosevelt developed a sympathetic attitude toward the

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[2]The best biographical material on Roosevelt can be found in Mowry, Era of Theodore Roosevelt; Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1948); Henry Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, A Biography (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1931).

[3]Henry Cabot Lodge (ed.), Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge (2 vols., New York: Scribners, 1925), I, 68-69; 97; 223-224.

rancher, such sympathy was not extended to the farmer. Writing in Century in 1898, Roosevelt expressed his early attitude toward ranchers and farmers when he wrote: "The ranchers are much better fellows and pleasant companions than small farmers or agricultural laborers; nor are the mechanics and workingmen of a great city to be mentioned in the same breath."[4] One might expect such a statement from a son of New York City society who had not learned to appreciate the everyday work of the nation.

His experiences as governor of New York did little to broaden his contacts with the farm population. Although he made the conventional appearances at country fairs and farm gatherings, the Governor's program was one of tax, civil service, and municipal government reform.[5]

Throughout Roosevelt's years of public service prior to 1900, his main interests were the enactment of civil service legislation, the liberation of the Cubans, naval expansion, and honest city government. In his own words, he was "straight New York."[6] Roosevelt was the product of a growing urban America.

When he came to the White House upon the death of

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[4]"Ranch Life in the Far West," Century, XXV (May, 1888), 500-502.

[5]Lodge, Roosevelt-Lodge Correspondence, I, 417-419; Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, 146-147.

[6]Theodore Roosevelt, An Autobiography (New York: Scribners, 1913), 193.

McKinley in 1901, he realized that now he was the representative of all classes of society--workers and farmers as well as the wealthy and socially important. Conscious of his social and economic background, he strove to construct a presidential image that would be acceptable to all walks of life. His goal was to be that of Abraham Lincoln, "close to the plain people."[7] Reflecting upon his years as President in 1908, Roosevelt believed that he had been successful in creating this image: ". . . I hope to be considered the President who has had particularly close at heart the welfare of the farmer and the small businessman, in fact, of Abraham Lincoln's plain people generally."[8]

The President found delight in his belief that the working classes "felt that I was just as much in sympathy with them, just as devoted to their interests, as if I had sprung from among their own ranks."[9] Describing a trip through the agricultural West in 1903, the President saw little difference between himself and farmer: "For all the superficial differences between us, down at the bottom these men and I think a good deal alike, or at least have the same ideals, and I am always sure of reaching them in speeches."[10]

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[7]Roosevelt to John Stewart, October 29, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. See also, Roosevelt to George Trevelyan, May 9, 1905, ibid.

[8]Roosevelt to John Stewart, October 29, 1905, ibid.

[9]Roosevelt to George Otto Trevelyan, March 9, 1905, ibid.

[10]Roosevelt to John Hay, August 9, 1903, ibid.

Roosevelt's statements concerning the nature and character of the American farmer, however, reveal him as a promotor of "agricultural fundamentalism." According to one historian, "agricultural fundamentalism" represents "a kind of homage that Americans have paid to the fancied innocence of their origins."[11] Agricultural fundamentalism perpetuated the following themes: the yeoman farmer is an ideal man and citizen; rural life has special value and virtue; the farmer is the incarnation of the honest, healthy and happy man; and farming is important for its moral and civic influence on the nation. In Jeffersonian terminology: "The small land holders are the most precious part of the state."[12]

Although the industrial revolution and its impact upon the American economic and social structure clearly focused attention on the decline of the importance of agriculture, Roosevelt's view was similar to that of Jefferson. To him the "farmer who owns his farm" was the "preeminently typical American."[13] In interpreting history, Roosevelt concluded that the permanent greatness of any state "must ultimately depend more upon the character of its country

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[11]Richard Hofstadter, Age of Reform, From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1955), 18-19.

[12]Quoted in Hofstadter, Age of Reform, 24-25.

[13]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," The Works of Theodore Roosevelt (20 vols., New York: Scribners, 1926), XVI, 133. Hereafter cited as Works of TR.

population than upon anything else."[14] Roosevelt emphasized the importance of the "family farm" when he told a Keokuk, Iowa, audience in 1907 that:

> Nothing is more important to this country than the perpetuation of our system of medium-sized farms worked by their owners . . . . From the standpoint of the nation as a whole it is preeminently desirable to keep as one of our chief American types the farmer, the home-maker, of the medium-sized farm. This type of farm home is one of our strongest political and social bulwarks.[15]

He maintained that no growth of cities or wealth could make up for the loss of the agrarian nature and character of America.[16]

Early in his Presidency before a gathering of Maine farmers, Roosevelt extolled the virtues of the agrarian character when he asserted:

> It remains true that the country-man, the man on the farm, more than any other of our citizens today, is called upon continually to exercise the qualities which we like to think as typical of the United States throughout its history--the qualities of rugged independence, masterful resolution, and individual energy and resourcefulness. . . . His life passes in healthy surroundings which tend to develop a fine type of citizenship.[17]

Later in 1909 at the end of his administration, the President expressed this same attitude of "agricultural

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[14] Ibid.

[15] White House Speeches, October 1, 1907, Roosevelt Papers.

[16] "The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 133.

[17] White House Speeches, August 29, 1902, Roosevelt Papers.

fundamentalism" when he declared that:

> . . . The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life. Upon the development of country life rests ultimately our ability . . . to continue to feed and clothe the hungry nations; to supply the city with fresh blood, clean bodies; and clear brains that can endure terrific strains of modern life.[18]

To Theodore Roosevelt, the "farmer who owns his own farm" was the economic and social, even the moral, backbone of the country. Although the President emphasized the importance of agriculture in the economic and social fabric of the nation, the Roosevelt administration was primarily concerned with industrial-urban problems and foreign affairs. Among the headlines describing Rooseveltian action concerning trust-busting, the "big stick," or the "square deal," one can hardly find notice of the administration's attitudes and policies toward agriculture. This does not mean that Roosevelt was unsympathetic to agriculture, or that there were no agricultural policies. It does indicate, however, that agricultural policies were of secondary importance in a nation experiencing industrial revolution and to a country venturing upon the stage of world diplomacy.

First of all, the immediate and pressing problems inflicted by rapid industrialization concerned labor conditions, the growth of monopoly, and urbanization. The

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[18]U.S., Congress, Senate, Report of the Country Life Commission, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, 1909, S. Doc. 705, 9.

muckrakers and public demanded that these glaring problems be solved, and the President responded to this call for action. Secondly, the Spanish-American War had raised the United States to the level of a world power with worldwide possessions. Because of this, a great share of the President's energies were spent in dealings with other countries and in guiding American diplomacy. Third, as explained earlier, this was a period when farm conditions were relatively good. The rural press, farmers, as well as the President, spoke of the return of farm prosperity. The problems that confronted agriculture were not as spectacular or, at that time, as pressing as those which faced the factory worker or the city dweller. There were few agrarian muckrakers.

In spite of the President's preoccupation with these matters, he became increasingly aware of farm problems and conditions. Roosevelt was the first President of industrial America to attempt to understand the economics, organizations, and problems of farming. And since the enactment of the Homestead Law in 1862, no administration expressed more concern for the future of American agriculture than that of Theodore Roosevelt.

Consistent with his ideas that the government should play a more active role in foreign and domestic affairs, he believed that the government must also enter more fully into the area of agriculture. His messages to Congress indicate

a concern for the specific problems of agriculture. When the boll weevil began to ravage Southern cotton fields in 1903, he urged the Congress to enact "remedial legislation" to aid the cotton farmer against the weevil.[19] Two years later he promised a group of farmers that "every assistance shall be given" agriculture "that can be given by the National Government."[20]

Perhaps even more important than his official communications to the Congress, was Roosevelt's "The Man Who Works With His Hands" speech delivered in Lansing, Michigan, in 1907. The content and meaning of this address indicate Roosevelt's interest in, and concern for, the American farmer and American agriculture. It was fitting that this speech in part concerned itself with the education of the American farmer since it was delivered to celebrate the semicentennial of the founding of agricultural colleges in the United States.[21]

First of all, the President pointed out that American education hitherto had "been well nigh wholly lacking on the side of industrial training, of a training which fits a man . . . for the farm."[22] He maintained that this was not

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[19]"Third Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 195.

[20]White House Speeches, October 20, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[21]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 129.

[22]Ibid., 131-132.

in accord with our democratic way of life. "Indeed, too often our schools train away from the . . . forge," the President continued. The farmer, according to Roosevelt, must be given the same training for his "calling" as the doctor receives for his.[23]

The need for increased agricultural education was obvious, the President stated, "when one views the actual shrinkage in the number of the farming population since the Civil War." The answer to this problem was agricultural education that would instill scientific and business-like methods into the soul of the farming population.[24] At the same time, however, Roosevelt's address stressed the growing need to be concerned with the social problems of American agriculture.

The President lauded the Department of Agriculture for promoting the use of the latest scientific and "modern" techniques. But now, proclaimed Roosevelt, the government "must recognize the far-reaching importance of the study and treatment of the problems of farm life alike from the social standpoints."[25] In Rooseveltian language, "It has been dealing with growing crops. It must hereafter deal also with living men."[26] To Roosevelt the drift toward the city was

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[23]Ibid., 133.

[24]Ibid., 133-134.

[25]Ibid., 137.

[26]Ibid.

as much a result of social discontent in the country as it was economic opportunities in the cities. And, perhaps, more significant, Roosevelt viewed this as a problem not alone of the farmer but also of the government. This attitude offered a marked contrast with the positions taken by either Cleveland or McKinley.

Although Roosevelt called for expanded government action, he always maintained that it must be accompanied by "self help." This philosophy was well illustrated when Roosevelt wrote to the President of Orange Judd Company:

> Self-help is the best help and makes the best citizenship, but the highest type of self-help is that which is combined with the right kind of helpfulness to others. Of course the prime thing to be done for the farmer . . . is to help him to help himself.[27]

This philosophy found expression in Roosevelt's support of voluntary farm organizations. "It is only through such combination," declared Roosevelt, "that American farmers can develop to the full their economic and social power."[28] Under modern business conditions such organization was vital to the future of agriculture.

In his Sixth Annual Message of 1906 the President told the Congress that:

> Organization has become necessary in the business world; and it has accomplished much for good in

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[27]Roosevelt to Herbert Myrick, September 10, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

[28]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 140.

> the world of labor. It is no less necessary for farmers . . . . The benefits to be derived by the association of farmers for mutual advantage are partly economic and partly sociological.[29]

A year later he again emphasized the importance of the co-operative movement for the farm population when he averred that "the farmer must not lose his independence, his initiative, his rugged self-reliance; yet he must learn to work in the heartiest cooperation with his fellows."[30]

No doubt Roosevelt's idea that "the prime thing to be done for the farmer . . . is to help him help himself" was responsible for his interest in the growth and expansion of the activities of the Department of Agriculture. Shortly after the death of McKinley, Secretary of Agriculture, James Wilson, wrote: "The new President takes a very keen interest in agricultural scientific education. He has been very kind to me . . .; in fact I might say somewhat partial."[31] The files of Secretary Wilson indicate that this relationship continued throughout the entire Roosevelt administration.

The underlying principle of the Department of Agriculture, as Roosevelt indicated, was to help the farmer help himself. During the Roosevelt years, the Department grew rapidly. In 1897 the Department's annual budget was under

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[29]"Sixth Annual Message," ibid., XV, 374-376.

[30]"Seventh Annual Message," ibid., 441-442.

[31]Wilson to W. A. Henry, September 30, 1901, Papers of the Secretary.

$3,000,000 with less than 2,500 employees, while in 1913 the budget was almost $25,000,000 with 14,000 people in the Department. Under the Wilson regime, research and experimentation work were greatly increased; new bureaus and divisions were established; and new means of educating the farmer were devised.

The President and the Secretary of Agriculture were fully in agreement that education was necessary to successful farming. In 1907 Roosevelt insisted that "practical scientific agriculture" should be taught in the rural schools.[32] The same year Wallace's Farmer quoted Roosevelt as saying, "We should strive in every way to aid in the education of the farmer and should shape our school system with this end in view."[33] And in the following year he supported the Davis Bill which called for the use of Federal funds for agricultural and industrial education in the secondary schools. In favoring the act, Roosevelt declared that "the national government should take an active part in securing better educational methods . . . as outlined in the bill introduced by Mr. Davis."[34]

The concern of Roosevelt for the future of agriculture and the American farmer was also expressed in the

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[32]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 129-144.

[33]Wallace's Farmer, XXXII (October 11, 1907), 4.

[34]Roosevelt to Herbert Myrick, September 10, 1908 Roosevelt Papers.

administration's attitude toward land policy. During Roosevelt's presidency, federal land policy was closely studied and the homestead principle was expanded. In land law reform, Roosevelt championed the cause of the small farmer--those who had "to plow and pitch hay themselves."[35] Roosevelt explained his position while addressing a meeting of Wyoming stockmen:

> I am particularly anxious that every legitimate means shall be taken to encourage the establishment of homes upon the public domain. In all legislation affecting the use of public lands the interest of the homestead settler must be carefully guarded.[36]

He underscored the point that "in every case the homesteader must be given first consideration."[37]

Roosevelt's actions indicated this concern for the welfare of the homesteader. The President's vigorous support of a federal reclamation and irrigation program led to the enactment of the National Reclamation Act of 1902. To Roosevelt reclamation of the arid West was important because it would promote "the greatest possible number of homes on the land, and . . . create communities of free-holders."[38] According to the President, "successful homemaking is but

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[35]Theodore Roosevelt, Presidential Addresses and State Papers (New York: Scribners, 1910), I, 1388-1390.

[36]Roosevelt to Stockmen of Wyoming, May 10, 1907, Roosevelt Papers.

[37]Ibid.

[38]"Fifth Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 314-316.

another name for the upbuilding of the nation."[39]

Along with federal reclamation, Roosevelt called for the reform of existing land laws, maintaining that "public lands should be held rigidly for the home builder, the settler who lives on the land, and no one else."[40] At the end of his first year as President, he complained to Congress that "the desert land law, the timber and stone law, and the commutation clause of the homestead act have been so perverted . . . to permit the acquisition of large areas of the public domain for other than actual settlers . . . ."[41] This twisting of land laws prompted the President to summon a commission of experts to study the land law problem. The findings of the Public Lands Commission supported Roosevelt's contentions concerning the misuse of the land laws.

Although Roosevelt urged remedial legislation to plug the loopholes and to create a more effective land policy, Congress was hesitant to tamper with the existing public domain policy. Although it did repeal the infamous Forest Land Lieu Act of 1897, the national legislators did not touch the desert land law, the timber and stone law, and the commutation clause of the homestead act.[42]

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[39]"First Annual Message," ibid., 105-106.

[40]"Second Annual Message," ibid., 161.

[41]Ibid.

[42]The Roosevelt land policies are discussed in detail below in Chapters IV and V.

During the Roosevelt years, the Congress expanded the homestead principle with the enactments of the Kincaid Act of 1904, the Forest Homestead Bill of 1906, and the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909. Roosevelt maintained that these measures must place a premium upon the welfare of the actual settler because "this is the hand of man upon whom the foundations of our civilization rest and it is eminently proper to favor him in every way."[43] Roosevelt saw himself as the champion of the homesteader.

During the last years of his administration, Roosevelt turned his attention to the question of the betterment of farm life. In his "The Man Who Works With His Hands" speech delivered at Lansing, Michigan, in 1907, he first publicly stressed the need for a study of rural conditions. Although he advanced no definite program he did declare that "we must consider . . . not merely how to produce, but also how the production affects the producer. In the past we have given but scant attention to the social side of farm life."[44] Roosevelt urged that there "must be in the country . . . movements for intellectual advancement and social betterment."[45] The President emphasized the importance

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[43]Roosevelt to Wilson, December 21, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[44]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 138-139.

[45]Ibid., 141.

of such a country life movement when he averred that "with the single exception of the conservation of our natural resources . . ., there is no other material question of greater importance now before the American people."[46]

The result of the President's interest in the question of country life led to the appointment of a commission to investigate agrarian conditions. Headed by Liberty Hyde Bailey, nationally recognized agricultural educator, the Country Life Commission surveyed the farm scene at the eleventh hour of the Roosevelt administration. Although the study was superficial, the work of the commission and Roosevelt's vigorous support aroused great interest in the country life movement. Roosevelt believed it to be one of the great contributions of his presidency.

Roosevelt's attitudes and policies toward agriculture were typical of his general approach to the role of government in American society. Roosevelt was president in a time of transition; he himself personified this transition with a curious mingling of the old and the new in his political philosophy. To some he appeared to be a Hamiltonian; to others a Jeffersonian. As regards agriculture, Roosevelt appeared to be a mixture of both. He believed that the farmer, the small land holder, was the economic and social core of the nation. At the same time he sought to solve farm

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[46]Roosevelt to Liberty Hyde Bailey, August 10, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

problems through Hamiltonian means--an expanded national government. Both his support of the expanded activities of the Country Life Commission point to this fact.

Even after his flirtation with "radicalism" in 1910 and 1912, he adhered to this philosophy. In viewing the farm situation on the eve of American entry into World War One, the former President believed that the most serious problem confronting American agriculture was the trend toward tenant farming. Roosevelt predicted that if tenant farming "remains unchecked, half a century hence we shall have deliberately permitted ourselves to plunge into the situation which brought chaos to Ireland, and which in England resulted in the complete elimination of the old yeomanry."[47] Earlier in 1907 Roosevelt had raised the question of farm tenancy. Speaking ina similar manner, he said: "Nothing is more important to this country than the perpetuation of our system of medium-sized farms worked by their owners. We do not want to see our farmers sink to the condition of the peasants in the old world." However, at that time he had proposed no program wherein a solution might be found.[48] To Roosevelt, tenant farming was inconsistent with the Jeffersonian ideal of the small land holder.

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[47]Theodore Roosevelt, The Foes of Our Own Household (New York: Scribners, 1917), 191.

[48]Wallace's Farmer, XXXII (October 11, 1907), 1145.

A second condition which needed attention in 1917, according to Roosevelt, was the problem of a "shifting, seasonal, tramp type of labor."[49] Roosevelt maintained that this class of agricultural migrant labor should be given the chance to homestead. In familiar terms the former President pointed to a third farm problem, the betterment of country life: "Our object must be . . . to care for the woman on the farm as much as for the man, and to eliminate the conditions which so often tend to make her life one of gray and sterile drudgery."[50]

At this same time Roosevelt stressed two other problems: the growth of "great landed estates" which "consist of unused agricultural land" and lack of available capital.[51] His desire to break up large estates and his plan to make capital available were vital to making the tenant a landowner. In order to break up the large land holdings, he proposed a graduated land tax or equalization of taxes between used and unused agricultural land. Roosevelt admitted that there would be criticism of such a plan, but asserted that this was a time "not merely to talk."[52]

Roosevelt also felt that basic to solving the tenant question was the availability of capital. He argued that

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[49]Roosevelt, Foes of Our Own Household, 194-195.

[50]Ibid.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Ibid., 196.

existing laws providing for farm loans did not "meet the most important case of all, that of the tenant farmer."[53] Financing was, of course, the first need of the tenant farmer if he were to gain title to his own land. Roosevelt maintained that a plan similar to that used in New Zealand would be desirable in the United States. According to this plan the government would purchase the land and sell it to the tenant farmer at the purchase price. The farmer would get low interest rates and repay the government over a period of years. In case of default of payment, the land would revert back to the government.[54]

In these specific proposals, Roosevelt called for more direct government action than he had in the past. Yet, the Roosevelt philosophy of "self-help" was still clearly in evidence in 1917. According to the former President, the government could not be expected to solve all farm issues. The answers also lay in "cooperative efforts." While he was President, he had spoken many times about the necessity of farm organizations to deal with farm problems. In the years after leaving the White House, he became very outspoken in his admiration for the cooperative movement. In a 1912 Minneapolis speech, Roosevelt blamed agrarian social and economic problems on "lack of organization among farmers."

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid., 195.

He declared that the "cooperative system [is] the surest way to all-around improvement in rural conditions."[55]

In 1917 he maintained this same view: "Community self-help is normally preferable to using the machinery of government for tasks to which it is unaccustomed."[56] Roosevelt pointed to the successful European movements in which even granaries and slaughter houses were cooperatively run. He indicated an "interest" in the experimental work of the North Dakota Non-Partisan League in the area of expanded government services to farmers. He commended this "earnest effort," but believed that "this work could be done better by cooperative societies among the farmers themselves."[57] He praised the self-help concept developed by the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society which had established a land bank to help men become farmers.[58] Roosevelt warned the farm population that lack of cooperation would mean unsolved problems: "A single farmer today is no match for the corporations, railroads, and business enterprises with which he must deal. Only through cooperative organizations can our farmers build up their strength."[59] A balance of govern-

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[55]Speech, March 29, 1912, Roosevelt Papers.

[56]Roosevelt, Foes of Our Own Household, 199.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Ibid., 197-199.

[59]Ibid., 200.

ment action and "self-help" was Roosevelt's answer to the questions which faced American agriculture.

Here then were Theodore Roosevelt's attitudes and policies toward American agriculture. Little attention has been given to the factors and people who influenced these attitudes and policies. Roosevelt's actions and thinking concerning agriculture were indeed the result of the advice, consultation, and influence of three men: James Wilson, Horace Plunkett, and Gifford Pinchot.

CHAPTER III

ROOSEVELT'S AGRICULTURAL ADVISERS

Three men were largely instrumental in shaping the agricultural policies of the Roosevelt years. Roosevelt's "farm brain trust" included Gifford Pinchot, close friend and head of the Forestry Bureau in the Department of Agriculture, Sir Horace Plunkett, Irish agricultural expert, and James "Tama Jim" Wilson, the Secretary of Agriculture under McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft.

Of the President's agricultural advisers, Gifford Pinchot ranks as his foremost friend and counselor on farm matters. Although Pinchot's professional training was in the area of forestry, Roosevelt took little action dealing with rural questions without Pinchot's advice.

Pinchot, a graduate of Yale, had gone to Europe in 1889 to study his chosen profession. While he was in Germany, Pinchot had the opportunity to meet Detrich Brandis, the world's leading forester. Brandis encouraged the young American to enroll in the French Forest School in Nancy.[1] After

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[1]M. Nelson McGreary, Gifford Pinchot Forester, Politician (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), 20-22.

a year of study, Pinchot returned home to apply what he had learned abroad to American forest problems.

Pinchot had learned that trees were a crop--like wheat or corn. To him, forestry was the art of using a forest without destroying it. While most Americans believed that the way to preserve a forest was to keep out the lumberjack, Pinchot held that a forest could be both harvested and preserved through proper methods.

After working briefly as a private forester, Pinchot undertook the task of managing the Biltmore experimental forest estate of George W. Vanderbilt in North Carolina.[2] Pinchot and others urged Congress in the early 1890's to establish a commission to investigate and report on government timber reserves. Failing to get much response from Congress, Pinchot turned to Secretary of the Interior, Hoke Smith. Smith agreed to request such a study commission. The National Forest Commission, which was set up in response to Smith's request, was headed by Dr. Charles Sargent of Harvard University while Pinchot served as secretary.[3] The Commission suggested that President Cleveland set aside 21,000,000 acres of timber reserve. At that time there were only 17,500,000 in the entire reserve.[4]

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[2]Gifford Pinchot Diary, October 18, 1891, Gifford Pinchot Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Hereafter cited as Pinchot Papers.

[3]Pinchot to Detrich Brandis, April 25, 1896, ibid.

[4]McBreary, Pinchot, 39.

Pinchot's role in the National Forest Commission led to his appointment to the post of "special forest agent" under McKinley's Secretary of the Interior Cornelius Bliss.[5] Thus began Pinchot's career as a government forester.

In 1898 Secretary of Agriculture Wilson sought Pinchot to head his Department's Forestry Division,[6] and that same year Pinchot joined Wilson's staff. Although the Division did not have its own forests, its foresters worked in private forests and, at the request of the Department of the Interior, prepared plans for the harvesting of timber in the government reserves controlled by that Department.[7]

Pinchot spent much time selling forestry to national political leaders. He cultivated friends in Congress and was adroit at fostering relationships with the right people. His biographer points out that "no pressure group . . . had a more active or effective lobbyist with the Congress."[8]

In 1901 the Forestry Division became a Bureau of Forestry and its personnel swelled from 11 to 179.[9] As Chief of the Bureau, Pinchot sought to have control of the

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[5]Pinchot to Mary Eno Pinchot, June 20, 1897, Pinchot Papers.

[6]James Wilson to Pinchot, May 31, 1898, ibid.

[7]Gifford Pinchot, Breaking New Ground (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1947), 145.

[8]McGreary, Pinchot, 50-52; see also, Pinchot to W. E. Borah, November 12, 1906, Pinchot Papers.

[9]Pinchot to J. W. Wadsworth, September 4, 1902, ibid.

government forests transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. He held that forestry was a component part of agriculture and that the Department of the Interior inadequately administered the reserves. Pinchot maintained that the Department of Agriculture was more familiar with and better prepared to handle the problems of the nation's forests.[10]

President Roosevelt supported Pinchot in his efforts to transfer the forest reserves to the Department of Agriculture. In 1904, the President made his most vigorous plea for congressional action:

> As I have repeatedly recommended, all the forest work of the government should be concentrated in the Department of Agriculture, where the larger part of that work is already done, where practically all of the trained foresters of the government are employed, where chiefly in Washington there is comprehensive first-class knowledge of the problems of the reserves acquired on the ground, where all problems relating to growth from the soil are already gathered, and where all sciences auxiliary to forestry are at hand for prompt and effective cooperation.
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> . . . Every administration officer concerned is convinced of the necessity for the proposed consolidation of forest work in the Department of Agriculture and I myself have urged it more than once in former messages. Again I commend it to the early and favorable consideration of the Congress. The interests of the nation at large and of the West in particular have suffered greatly because of the delay.[11]

The Congress at last complied with the President's request,

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[10]Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 236, 240-246.

[11]"Fourth Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 237-238.

and in 1905 transferred the reserves to the Department of Agriculture.

The cooperative effort to accomplish the transfer was only one of the many examples of the close relationship between Pinchot and Roosevelt. The Pinchot and Roosevelt families had been friends for many years. As early as 1894, Pinchot's diary mentions a dinner with the Roosevelt family. It is clear that Pinchot and Roosevelt quickly developed an ardent friendship for each other. In many ways they were similar in nature. Each loved the outdoors. Each came from families of high social status; Pinchot had gone to Yale, Roosevelt to Harvard.[12]

Roosevelt had nominated Pinchot for the Boone and Crockett Club in 1897. While he was Governor of New York, Roosevelt called upon Pinchot for advice concerning the Empire State's forest problems. The two men hiked, wrestled, boxed, and played tennis together in both Albany and Washington.[13]

Roosevelt came to have unbounded confidence in Pinchot's judgment. Few important decisions were made by Roosevelt on matters relative to the Departments of the

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[12]Pinchot Diary, November 27, 1899, Pinchot Papers; Roosevelt, Autobiography, 393.

[13]Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 145; Pinchot Diary, January 8, 1903, July 3, 1903, December 16, 1904, October 11, 1905, November 11, 1905, Pinchot Papers.

Interior and Agriculture without consultation with Pinchot.[14] Pinchot became the President's ghost writer on conservation and agricultural affairs.[15] The forester's biographer points out that it was common "for the President to give Pinchot free rein to speak for him officially."[16]

Pinchot's advice on farm questions usually resulted in Presidential action. The President sought Pinchot's ideas on reclamation and homestead legislation, and he wrote most of Roosevelt's speeches on reclamation and the arid west.[17] As head of the Bureau of Forestry, Pinchot dealt with grazing problems and the agricultural usage of government forest reserves. Professor McGreary states that "through the years there were numerous indications that he developed a genuine concern for the rural population."[18]

As Roosevelt's "favorable commissioner,"[19] Pinchot suggested the advisability of setting up a commission to study farm life and problems. Pinchot himself composed the

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[14]Roosevelt to Pinchot, April 2, 1906, January 28, 1907, ibid.

[15]Pinchot Diary, January 28, 1907, ibid.

[16]McGreary, Pinchot, 55.

[17]Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 385.

[18]McGreary, Pinchot, 100.

[19]Pinchot was instrumental in the establishment of five Presidential fact-finding commissions: The Keep Committee, which investigated departmental methods, the Inland Waterways Commission, the National Conservation Commission, the Public Lands Commission, and the Country Life Commission.

letter that the President issued established the Country Life Commission, and also suggested the membership of the commission.[20] There is no doubt that of Roosevelt's agricultural advisers, Gifford Pinchot was the most influential in determining what the administration's policy would be.

Of the President's advisers, Sir Horace Plunkett of Ireland directed Roosevelt's attention to rural problems and stimulated his interests in the question of country life. Just as Pinchot and Roosevelt were similar in nature, so were Plunkett and Roosevelt. Both men were born into wealth and were well educated.[21] Both were "American cowboys"; Roosevelt ranched in Dakota, while Plunkett was part owner of a Wyoming ranch. The two dedicated themselves to public service and were progressive men of action. Roosevelt's trust in and admiration for Sir Horace Plunkett no doubt stemmed from the fact that they were very much alike.[22]

Plunkett founded the Irish Agricultural Organization Society in the 1890's, and was Secretary of the Irish Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for many years. The Irish agriculturalist first came into contact with

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[20]Pinchot to Roosevelt, June 29, 1908, Pinchot Papers. Pinchot recommended his own name for the commission. It is interesting to note that his letter of reply to the invitation referred to "the honor you have done me by the appointment." Pinchot to Roosevelt, August 11, 1908, ibid.

[21]Margaret Digby, Horace Plunkett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 39-64. Plunkett attended Oxford University.

[22]Ibid., 84-85.

Roosevelt in 1901 when the two lunched together at the White House.[23] It was not until 1905 and 1906, however, that the two seriously discussed American agriculture and its problems.

In January of 1906 while Plunkett was visiting at the White House, the President requested that he write a memorandum expressing his views on American rural life. This, Roosevelt believed, would aid him in understanding "the unwholesome tendency towards the urban concentration of our population."[24]

By mid-summer of the same year, Roosevelt had Plunkett's memorandum on his desk. Plunkett considered this twenty page pamphlet a blueprint for the inauguaration of a country life movement in the United States.[25] Historians have overlooked the significance of Plunkett's pamphlet, The Problem of Rural Life In America, in stimulating Roosevelt's thought on Country Life because it was not published for the American market until 1910[26]--two years after the formation of the Country Life Commission. The only scholarly study of the Country Life Commission does not mention this writing of

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[23]Ibid., 116.

[24]Horace Plunkett to Roosevelt, June 22, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

[25]Plunkett to Roosevelt, July 7, 1906, ibid.

[26]Sir Horace Plunkett, The Rural Life Problem of the United States (New York: Macmillan Co., 1910), and The Problem of Rural Life in the United States (Dublin: Thom and Co., 1906).

Plunkett.[27] The presence of Plunkett's pamphlet, which was privately published in Dublin in 1906, in the Roosevelt files for that year indicates that the Irishman's writing turned Roosevelt's attention toward rural social problems two years before the naming of the commission. The President indicated his enthusiastic interest in Plunkett's approach to rural questions when he replied that

> Your extremely interesting confidential pamphlet has just arrived. By George, I wish you were an American and either in the Senate or my Cabinet! You take an interest in exactly the problems which I regard as vital, and you approach them in what seems to me to be the only sane and healthy way.[28]

Plunkett's work no doubt influenced Roosevelt's ideas which the President expressed in his "Man Who Works with His Hands" speech of 1907.

In the letter which accompanied the pamphlet, marked "confidential," Plunkett asserted that the President would have to play an active role in beginning and directing a country life movement if it were to be successful. The Irishman hinted at this point that a revamping of departmental functions might be necessary to assure a successful reform movement.[29]

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[27]Clayton Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," Agricultural History, XXXIV (October, 1960), 155-172.

[28]Roosevelt to Plunkett, July 3, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

[29]Plunkett to Roosevelt, July 7, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

In The Problem of Rural Life in the United States, Plunkett warned that the existing level of farm prosperity "sets up a false economic standard."[30] He explained that this "will prove to be a bad preparation for the less bountiful times that must some day come."[31] Farm life, he maintained, had to be improved during years of prosperity, because "when bad days come it is too late."[32]

The Irish Secretary of Agriculture was concerned that the "psychological" problems of farming be examined. "Rural society must be provided with a higher standard of physical comfort, with better opportunities for intellectual development . . . . A new sense of dignity must be engendered among those who pursue the patriarchal calling."[33] Roosevelt echoed these words many times.

Plunkett, however, held that idle talk could solve no problems. Like the President, he was a man of action. In this confidential pamphlet he urged that his ideas be crystallized into a "definite policy which must take shape in a detailed scheme."[34] To Plunkett, the federal government would have to take the initiative, and "the branch of

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[30]Plunkett, Problem of Rural Life in the United States, 7.

[31]Ibid., 8.

[32]Ibid., 9.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Ibid., 9.

government to which the definite function belongs is obviously the Department of Agriculture."[35]

The Irish agriculturalist outlined four areas of action. The first was education. He asserted that "extending and perfecting" agricultural education was not enough. "The cultivation of that deep Wordsworthian insight into and affection for nature as the greatest of revealers, teachers, and comforters"[36] must also be included in the educational experience of the American farmer.

According to Plunkett, this "Wordsworthian insight" held the answer to one of the farmers' psychological problems--an inferiority complex. This type of education, he wrote, would instill within the agrarians' breast a "new sense of dignity."[37] Such an approach to farm education must have surely appealed to a President with a deep respect for nature and understanding of literature.

The second area of action concerned cooperatives. Plunkett believed that the American farmer "must develop a social and cooperative spirit." He observed that this spirit of cooperation had been retarded among American farmers because of "the strong individualism which is the dominant sentiment of the people."[38] He pointed out that the advancement

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[35] Ibid., 10.

[36] Ibid., 11.

[37] Ibid., 11.

[38] Ibid., 12-13.

of European agriculture was possible only because of the spirit of cooperation which flourished across the Atlantic. It was just as necessary to organize in agriculture as it was in the business segment of the economy, according to Plunkett. The cooperative was "the agency of rural social progress."[39] This type of farm organization would give new social and economic life to American agriculture. Plunkett's attitude toward the cooperative movement did much to influence Roosevelt; the cooperative fit well into Roosevelt political philosophy for it emphasized the concept of "self help."

Thirdly, Plunkett urged immediate governmental action that would bring "formal recognition" of the rural life problem. He asserted that a "methodical and sustained study of the problem in its entirety is one of the highest duties of government."[40] Two years before the Country Life Commission's creation, Plunkett called for the establishment of a rural life study.

As outlined by Plunkett, the fourth area of government action concerned the Department of Agriculture. He suggested that the Department turn its attention to three questions. First of all, Plunkett believed there should be more cooperation between the Federal and State Departments. Secondly, the Department should coordinate its educational

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[39]Ibid., 14.

[40]Ibid., 15.

work with other educational institutions such as agricultural colleges. And thirdly, according to Plunkett, the Department should actively promote the development of agricultural cooperatives.[41] To the Irish observer, these were glaring shortcomings of the Department of Agriculture.

Plunkett concluded his pamphlet by proclaiming that the primary task was to place the rural life problem in the "public mind."[42] And certainly if any President could do this, it was Theodore Roosevelt.

Just as Plunkett stimulated the President's interest in country life problems, James Wilson focused Roosevelt's attention on the need for scientific investigation to promote American farming. Wilson, who had been appointed Secretary of Agriculture in 1897 by William McKinley, served in the capacity of adviser as well as administrator. His biographer describes the Department of 1897 in the following colorful manner:

> When Wilson put his hands to the wheel, the Department of Agriculture was a joke and a byword. To the urban press it furnished a daily jest to lighten the dull columns of events. To the tiller of the soil it was merely an illustration of the fatuousness of book farming. And to the political economist it was another instance of a government agency rushing in where angels feared to tread.[43]

Although Early Wilcox's description of the Department of

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[41] Ibid., 16-18.

[42] Ibid., 20.

[43] Early Wilcox, Tama Jim (Boston: Stratford Co., 1930), 5-6.

Agriculture as Wilson became Secretary is an exaggeration, the Department was a young fledgling organization still trying to learn what its function was. James Wilson gave the Department the direction and leadership that was needed during its formative years. Wilcox is not far from the target when he proclaims that "James Wilson founded the Department of Agriculture."[44]

Wilson was well equipped to head the Department. He first came to Iowa in the 1850's where he homesteaded in Tama County. Soon Wilson had established a farm of over 1,000 acres.[45] Successful farming led to success in politics. Three terms in the state legislature of Iowa made him familiar with the law-making machinery of the country. During his last term on the Iowa Railroad Commission, Wilson was elected to three terms in the House of Representatives, where he served on the agriculture committee.[46]

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[44] Ibid., 5.

[45] Ibid., 16-17.

[46] Wilson's exit from Congress was a dramatic event. Early Wilcox describes it as follows: "At the close of the forty-eighth Congress his seat was contested. The contest has been postponed until the last day of the session and was a question of the highest privilege. Among the bills thus caught in the jam was one restoring former President Grant to the full rank of retired general. Unless the Democratic or Republican side of the contest gave way there was no possibility of considering this measure. It was then that Wilson rose and called on his friends to drop their opposition to taking a vote which he was aware would result in unseating himself . . . . Wilson announced that he would not stand in the way of the measure to restore the old commander who was then dying of cancer. Wilson was unseated."

In 1891 Wilson was appointed to the position of professor of agriculture and director of experiment stations at Iowa State College at Ames.[47] He held this position until his selection as Secretary of Agriculture in 1897. This was the finishing touch on sixty-two years of training. At Iowa State his ideas on agricultural education and the role to be played by science in the future of agriculture ripened and crystallized into a workable creed. In his earlier days Wilson had also been a school teacher and was aware that the accepted system of education did little for the farmer. While at Iowa he made a detailed study of agricultural education in the United States.[48]

Wilson's work at Ames also brought him to consider seriously the role of science in farming, and to what extent science could be depended upon in leading agriculture from the "rule-of-thumb" stage to a more precise and scientific approach to its problems.[49] Thus, when McKinley appointed Wilson to head the Department of Agriculture at the age of sixty-two, he selected one of America's most qualified agriculturalists.

Wilson's work as Secretary indicates that he was in full sympathy with the concept of the "new agriculture." To

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[47]Wilson to S. T. Clute, November 30, 1904, Papers of the Secretary.

[48]Wilson to W. T. Clute, November 30, 1904, ibid.

[49]Wilcox, Tama Jim, 22-23.

Wilson the "new agriculture" meant essentially two things: the application of scientific principles to agricultural problems and the development of an educational system whereby these scientific principles could be taught to the American farm population. The basic motive influencing Wilson's concept of the "new agriculture" was the increase of farm production. Even with the application of scientific principles to farming, Wilson doubted that the American farmer could continue to supply adequate food stuffs if the rural population continued to dwindle in the total American population.[50]

His support of the "back to the land movement" was consistent with the attempt of his department to increase production. In a literary debate with Josiah Strong in 1911, Wilson declared that "the Back to the Land movement is not fallacious, and it will have to be put into force naturally or otherwise, if the people are to be fed."[51]

Research and science were both important in the "new agriculture" idea of James Wilson for they would be instrumental in increasing farm production. According to Wilson, science for the sake of science was worthless. Science had to have a practical application. Wilson related this view when he wrote: "As far as this department is concerned we

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[50]Wilson to Henry C. Wallace, December 16, 1901; to F. H. LaBaume, June 11, 1908, Papers of the Secretary.

[51]Wilson to E. F. Baldwin, editor of Outlook, January 25, 1911, ibid.

do scarcely any work that has not in view the immediate application of science to some feature of agriculture."[52]

In similar tone, Wilson repeatedly extolled the virtue of education--to him it was the key to successful farming. The farmer, according to Wilson, "needs more than the experiences of a life time which he might get from his father; he needs to know what has been discovered with regards to the sciences that relate to agriculture."[53] Under Wilson the department expanded its educational activity primarily in an attempt to bring the latest in scientific research to application on the American farmstead.[54]

The Secretary also supported increased formal education for farmers. He was in constant communication with college and university presidents urging them to establish agricultural courses or departments in their schools.[55] He recognized the need for agricultural training on the primary and secondary school levels. Emphasizing this viewpoint he wrote: "The farmer has been suffering through all the ages from the want of education relating to his life work while other classes have had such preparation. The most pressing

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[52]Wilson to J. B. Weems, September 26, 1901. See also to H. W. Winter, September 26, 1901; to Charles Burkett, December 12, 1901, ibid.

[53]Wilson to Charles Burkett, December 12, 1901, ibid.

[54]Wilson to W. L. Sticker, June 27, 1903, ibid.

[55]Wilson to W. A. Henry of the University of Wisconsin, September 23, 1903, ibid.

necessity is the introduction of agriculture in the primary schools."[56]

The movement for vocational agricultural education was strengthened in 1907 when the President delivered his Lansing speech. The influence of Secretary Wilson on Roosevelt's position in the matter was clearly in evidence. Speaking in true Wilsonian language, Roosevelt called for reforms that would give the farmer "the best possible education."[57] The following year, Roosevelt supported the use of federal appropriations for agricultural and industrial instruction in the secondary schools.[58]

Roosevelt and Wilson relationships were always friendly, harmonious, and filled with mutual respect. Roosevelt indicated this admiration when he wrote Secretary Wilson near the end of the administration:

> There isn't any member of the Cabinet--indeed I may say there isn't any man in my councils at all--whose judgment I prize as I do yours in matters political no less than agricultural. In short you fulfill the two requirements of being exactly the right kind of head of department, and of exactly the right kind of Cabinet member and advisor.[59]

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[56]Wilson to D. B. Purinton, December 16, 1903. See also, to C. F. Curtiss, March 7, 1907; to W. A. Tenner, April 7, 1904; to Cyrus Kephart, October 5, 1907; to James Day, February 15, 1904; to Joseph Kopf, June 18, 1903; to N. J. Morrison, August 23, 1902; to C. J. Marr, April 4, 1903, ibid.

[57]"The Man Who Works with His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 140-141.

[58]Roosevelt to Herbert Myrick, September 10, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

[59]Roosevelt to Wilson, July 31, 1908, ibid.

Earlier during the first term, Roosevelt expressed this same feeling when he urged Wilson, "Do be back here when Congress meets. You are a tower of strength to me."[60]

Both the Wilson and the Roosevelt manuscript collections indicate that the two men were in constant communication concerning matters of national consequence and that each sought the other's advice on problems ranging from crop reporting in Texas to diplomatic relations with Japan. "Tama Jim" was the only member of Roosevelt's cabinet to last all seven years. During his stay in the White House, Roosevelt had five postmasters general and six secretaries of the navy. As Wilcox puts it, "few men could be intimately associated for seven years with such an impulsive, energetic character as Roosevelt without a serious clash. Yet Wilson did it."[61]

The agricultural policies and attitudes of Roosevelt's administration bear the marks of these three men: a professional forester, Gifford Pinchot; an Irish agriculturalist and idealist, Sir Horace Plunkett; and the practical, yet professional, Secretary of Agriculture James Wilson. Roosevelt relied heavily upon the advice of Pinchot in all farm matters, especially in the area of land policy.

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[60]Roosevelt to Wilson, October 27, 1903, ibid.

[61]Wilcox, Tama Jim, 3. Other letters which point to the friendly relationship between Roosevelt and Wilson are: Roosevelt to Wilson, November 13, 1903, August 7, 1902, July 31, 1908, September 30, 1904; Wilson to Roosevelt, August 28, 1904, February 26, 1906, May 7, 1903, October 30, 1904, Roosevelt Papers.

Plunkett was instrumental in turning Roosevelt's attention to country life problems, while Wilson directed the government's growing program of agricultural scientific research and education to better American farming.

Roosevelt had little contact with agrarian spokesman such as farm editors, leaders of the Grange and Farmers Union, or agricultural educators. In 1904 he carried on conversations with Grange leaders over the appointment of a new Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. Yet, unlike McKinley, he selected a professional agriculturalist rather than a Grange leader for the position. Although in 1908 he appointed Henry Wallace, editor of Wallace's Farmer, and C. S. Barrett, President of the Farmers Union, to the Country Life Commission, his relationship with these men was limited to the work of the Commission.

Also, near the end of his administration, Roosevelt established a friendship with Cornell botanist Liberty Hyde Bailey through the offices of Gifford Pinchot. Although Bailey discussed farm questions with the President and served as chairman of the Country Life Commission, Roosevelt did not view Bailey as a member of his immediate advisery group.

It is significant that Roosevelt's agricultural advisers were all trained professionals. Just as Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin employed the use of such intellectuals as Richart T. Ely and John R. Commons in state problems, Roosevelt leaned heavily upon service intellectuals for guid-

ance in forming national farm policy. The French-trained Pinchot, the Oxford graduate Plunkett, and the Iowa educated Wilson formed the core of the President's "farm brain trust." In this Roosevelt was inaugurating a practice that would be more fully developed later by Franklin Roosevelt.[62]

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[62]For study of the service intellectual during the New Deal, see Richard S. Kirkendall, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Service Intellectual," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLIX (December, 1962), 456-471.

CHAPTER IV

RECLAMATION AND THE ARID WEST

Reflecting upon his years in the White House, Theodore Roosevelt in his Autobiography lamented the fact that matters of serious national concern were treated "as a disconnected series of pork-barrel problems."[1] Such, he commented, was the case with American land and conservation policies. He condemned this "narrow" approach to national conservation questions, and pointed out that the problems of arid lands, forest reservation, water conservation, and mineral protection were related and could not be dealt with as separate issues.[2]

The development of land policy had been anything but well organized and directed. Professor Roy Robbins in his study of the public domain characterizes this policy as reckless and aimless. "It seems clear in retrospect," states Robbins, "that had there been a clearer definition of policy, with a proper classification of public lands" the conserva-

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[1] Works of TR, V, 386.

[2] Ibid.

tion problems that faced the country at the turn of the century would not have been acute."[3]

Gifford Pinchot, in viewing the development of public land policy, believed that "the letter seemed . . . on the whole wise and right. They [land laws] were intended to help the small man make a living . . ., and to develop the country."[4] They were "theoretically in the right direction." However, according to Pinchot, "in practice, thanks to lax, stupid, and wrongheaded administration . . ., the land laws were easily twisted to the advantage of the big fellows."[5] With this viewpoint President Roosevelt agreed.

From the beginning of his term in 1901 into his post-presidency years, Roosevelt maintained that the land laws should protect the rights of the small homesteader and promote the family farm. Early in his administration he wrote that "policy must be in the interest of the . . . homemaker who comes to found a home and rear his children in the land."[6] Later in 1907 he averred that the government must pursue a "traditional homemaking policy . . . to its lands."[7] He avowed that "our whole purpose is to protect the public lands

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[3]Roy Robbins, Our Landed Heritage (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1942), 325.

[4]Gifford Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 161.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Roosevelt to Thomas Patterson, December 21, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[7]Roosevelt to James Wilson, June 7, 1907, ibid.

for the genuine homemaker."[8] Continuing in this same vein, he told a Denver audience in 1910 that "it is the homestead men, the small settlers, the actual homemaker, whose interests we must do most to preserve."[9] Roosevelt believed that the homestead farmer should be the focal point of land policy.

The "twisting of the land laws to the advantage of the big fellow" seemed to be one of the important factors that prompted Roosevelt toward public land reform. Since Roosevelt felt so keenly that the homemaker should be protected, he was angered by "the absorption of great areas of the public lands by large owners to the exclusion of honest settlers."[10] To Roosevelt this was an illustration of the moral issue that was at the heart of the progressive movement. Here was the small homemaker--exploited by the interests."

Secondly, Roosevelt was appalled at the lack of direction and professional leadership in the field of public land work. Conservation was to a great extent a scientific movement rising from the implications of science and technology in modern society. Leaders in the conservation movement came from fields like hydrology, forestry and geology.

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Theodore Roosevelt, The New Nationalism (New York: Outlook, 1910), 66.

[10] Roosevelt to James Wilson, June 7, 1907, Roosevelt Papers.

Active in professional circles in Washington, these leaders--such as Gifford Pinchot and Frederick Newell--brought the ideals and practices of their crafts into federal resource policy. Loyalty to these professional ideals set the tone for Roosevelt reform measures. Roosevelt believed that conservation problems should be solved, not by pork-barrel legislation, but by experts who would undertake scientific investigations and devise workable solutions. During his Presidency, he repeatedly sought the advice of expert commissions and looked upon the conservation movement as an attempt to apply this knowledge.[11]

A third factor was Roosevelt's love of the outdoors. The President viewed himself as a naturalist. From his Dakota ranch experiences to his rambles in the woods after retirement, Roosevelt was indeed a man of nature.[12] From boyhood, when he kept a notebook on natural history while traveling through the Adirondacks,[13] to the twilight of his life when he wrote a magazine article on "Common Sense and Animal Coloration,"[14] Roosevelt's love of nature and the

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[11]Samuel Hays, Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 2, 266.

[12]For a complete study of Roosevelt as a naturalist, see, Paul Russell Cartright, Theodore Roosevelt, The Naturalist (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956).

[13]Theodore Roosevelt's Diaries of Boyhood and Youth (New York: Scribners, 1928), 242-43.

[14]Works of TR, VI, 409.

outdoors seemed to grow with each passing day--even while he lived in the White House. During his lifetime, he authored or co-authored fifteen monographs on nature ranging from a backyard study, Notes on Some of the Birds of Oyster Bay, Long Island, to an investigation of the jungles of South America, Through the Brazilian Wilderness.[15] A Roosevelt biographer asserts, "Roosevelt began his life as a naturalist, and he ended it as a naturalist. Throughout half a century of strenuous activity, his interest . . . was never abandoned at any time."[16]

These three factors--his resentment of the "twisting" of land laws to benefit the "interests," his desire to have public land policy determined and administered by trained professionals, and his genuine love of nature and the outdoors--motivated Roosevelt's call for change in the area of public policy.

When in 1901 the President urged Congress to develop a new approach to the western arid land question through a national irrigation program,[17] he was not instituting a new idea. He was, however, offering his leadership to a

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[15]Notes on Some of the Birds of Oyster Bay, Long Island (New York: n.p., 1879), Through the Brazilian Wilderness (New York: Scribners, 1914). Other examples of his work as naturalist are, African Game Trails (New York: Scribners, 1910), The Deer Family (New York: Macmillan, 1902), The Wilderness Hunter (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), and Some American Game (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1897).

[16]Cartright, Naturalist, xiii.

[17]"First Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 108-109.

relatively young movement. One of the basic problems was that arid land west of the hundredth meridian had been settled under land laws that had been written to cover the areas east of the meridian. Congress seemed to feel that the Desert Land Act of 1877 was sufficient remedy for the situation.[18]

The homesteader who wished to farm in the arid west found it impossible without resources to finance an irrigation system.[19] Professor Robbins relates that speculating interests quickly gained control of water rights to the point of monopoly which "if allowed to stand might convert millions of settlers into tenants."[20] This situation coupled with the drouth, crop failures, and rising agricultural discontent of the 1880's compelled the government to reconsider the question of America's arid lands.[21]

Thus, in 1888 Congress authorized an investigation into the reclamation of arid lands. The report of the Geological Survey and a study made by a committee headed by Senator William Stewart of Nevada directed attention to the

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[18]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 325. This act permitted 640-acre homesteads with 25 cents an acre down payment. The homesteader agreed to irrigate the land within three years.

[19]Ibid., F. M. Blackmer, "The West, Water, and Grazing Laws," Survey Graphic, XXVI (March, 1937), 387.

[20]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 327.

[21]Elwood Mead, "Rise and Future of Irrigation in the United States," Yearbook, 1899, 591-612.

fact that reform was needed.[22] A series of Irrigation Congresses, the first held in 1891 in Salt Lake City, added still more pressure for change in land policy concerning reclamation.[23]

After several unsuccessful attempts, the Congress in 1894 enacted the Carey Bill. The Carey Act was designed to encourage the development of state and private irrigation systems. The measure guaranteed certain states as much land--up to one million acres--as it was able to irrigate and settle. The law required cultivation of at least 20 acres of each 160-acre tract. A ten year limit for meeting the terms of the law was established.[24] Through a plan of repayment, it was designed eventually to vest ownership of the irrigation system in the homesteaders. Installation of the systems was to be done by the states themselves or by contracted private companies.[25] Supporters of the Act hoped that with this governmental encouragement the irrigation and reclamation program would succeed. Just as

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[22]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 327.

[23]W. E. Smythe, "The Irrigation Idea and Its Coming Congress," Review of Reviews, VIII (October, 1893), 394, and "The Progress of Irrigation Thought in the West," Review of Reviews, X (October, 1894), 396-398; Official Report of the International Irrigation Congresses Held at Los Angeles, California, 1893 (Los Angeles, California: n.p., 1893), 157-160.

[24]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 328.

[25]E. Louise Peffer, The Closing of the Public Domain (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1951), 20.

irrigation projects were impossible for the individual settler to finance and build, so it was with the Western states. By 1899 only one state, Wyoming, had actually developed lands under the Carey Act.[26] It was obvious that the Carey Act was not the solution to the West's reclamation problem.

With what appeared to be the failure of the Carey Act, the feeling began to grow that the federal government should do more than just donate land to the states for irrigation projects. Many Westerners began to call for federal irrigation works. Among these two important spokesmen stand out. The first was George H. Maxwell, a young California attorney and a specialist in water law. He became convinced that many of the country's social problems stemming from rapid industrialization could be solved by irrigation of the arid west.[27] According to Maxwell, these lands would act as a "safety valve" for urban congestion. He spearheaded an educational campaign by writing pamphlets and organizing reclamation societies. One student of the conservation movement has remarked that Maxwell "became the major irrigation propagandist in the country."[28] The other outstanding proponent of reclamation was Nevada Congressman Frances G.

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[26]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 329.

[27]Hays, Conservation, 9-10.

[28]Ibid., 10.

Newlands. It was Newlands who offered the specific proposal that was accepted by Congress in 1902. Newlands had moved from the South to Nevada in 1889 and three years later was elected to the House of Representatives. He became deeply involved in the state's economic and political affairs. Newlands was convinced that irrigation farming would provide the only remedy for Nevada's declining population. He played a leading role in the first National Irrigation Congress and throughout the 1890's stood as the Western spokesman for federal irrigation projects.[29]

By 1900 the question of government irrigation projects to promote the reclamation and settlement of the arid west had become a national issue. And by 1900 the forces supporting federal aid for reclamation had found a champion in Theodore Roosevelt. Speaking to the National Irrigation Congress in 1900, Roosevelt indicated his support of federal aid in the development of western irrigation:

> I earnestly believe in the national government giving generous aid to the movement, for it is not possible . . . to have this work . . . done merely through private ownership; and owing to the peculiar necessities of the case, much of the work must be done by the national and not by any state governments.[30]

After becoming President, Roosevelt stressed the need for western reclamation in his first annual message to

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[29]Newlands' father-in-law was William Sharon, wealthy silver mine owner and Senator from Nevada. Upon the death of Sharon, Newlands took over management of the estate.

[30]Roosevelt to the National Irrigation Congress, November 16, 1900, Roosevelt Papers.

the Congress. It is important to note that it was Gifford Pinchot who, with George Maxwell, wrote the reclamation aspects of the message.[31] In his appeal for congressional action to solve the problem of the arid West, Roosevelt called for a Federal irrigation program:

> The object of the government is to dispose of the land to settlers who will build homes upon it. To accomplish this object water must be brought within their reach.
>
> The pioneer settlers on the arid public domain chose their homes along streams from which they could themselves divert the water to reclaim their holdings. Such opportunities are practically gone. There remain, however, vast areas of public land which can be made available for homestead settlement, but only by reservoirs and main-line canals impracticable for private enterprise. These irrigation works should be built by the National Government.[32]

Roosevelt pointed out that lands reclaimed by federal irrigation works should be reserved for actual settlers. He emphasized that the government's objective must be to dispose of the land "to settlers who will build homes upon it."[33] Sensing that opposition to such a proposal would come from the already settled east and middle-west, the President maintained that reclamation of the arid west would not mean agricultural competition with the east. "The products of irrigation will be consumed chiefly in upbuilding

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[31]Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 385.

[32]"First Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 105-106.

[33]Ibid.

local centres," argued the Chief Executive. "Our people as a whole will profit," he continued, "for successful homemaking is but another name for the upbuilding of the nation."[34]

With the new President's vigorous support Representative Newlands introduced the reclamation bill which would bear his name. Newlands' original plan called for federally financed irrigation through a fund to come from the sale of Western public lands. The Nevada politician advocated that the Secretary of the Interior should have complete control in the allocation of funds and allocation of projects. Newlands sought to centralize the administration of the program in the hands of experts rather than in the hands of Congress. He believed that Congressional control would lead to logrolling and delay.

Newlands also felt that no individual should receive water rights to more than 80 acres from a federal project. He also held that the Secretary of the Interior should have the power to withdraw from "all forms of entry" land in the program in order to prevent speculation.[35] The Nevada Representative believed that 80 acres was enough for irrigation agriculture and that the West, more specifically Nevada, would benefit from more homesteads.[36] There was both

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[34] Ibid., 105-106.

[35] A copy of the original bill introduced by Newlands is found in William E. Smythe, The Conquest of Arid America, 342-344.

[36] Proceedings, National Irrigation Congress, 1900, 114-115, as quoted in Hays, Conservation, 13.

Western and Eastern opposition to Newlands' original proposal. Many from the West believed that the acreage of land homesteaded should be raised to 160. According to Professor Hays, "the very word 'withdrawl' aroused Western farmers to a fighting pitch."[37] Similar withdrawals for railroad construction and forest reserves had met with agrarian opposition. Now Western interests hesitated to grant the Secretary of the Interior power to suspend entry, even temporarily.[38]

At this point Roosevelt entered into debate on the question. The President supported Western sentiment concerning both the 160 acre limit and the Secretary's power to suspend entry. He asserted that the aim of the reclamation act should not be "to reclaim the largest area of land and provide homes for the largest number of people."[39] The Chief Executive maintained that irrigation agriculture must be established under the "best possible social and industrial conditions."[40] This could be done better with 160 acres than 80, and without complete withdrawal from entry. Because of Western sentiment and the President's influence, Newlands

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[37]Hays, Conservation, 13.

[38]Frances G. Newlands to William F. Herrin, Newlands Papers, quoted in Hays, Conservation, 13.

[39]"First Message to Congress," Works of TR, XV, 108-109.

[40]Ibid., 109; Roosevelt to C. B. Boothe, October 10, 1902; to D. B. Fairly, October 4, 1902, Roosevelt Papers.

compromised on both points. The final draft of the measure called for 160 acre homesteads, and provided for the withdrawal of land from all private entry except under the homestead laws.[41]

The East opposed these western irrigation plans. Many Eastern Republicans argued that federal aid to irrigation in the West would create unfair competition with Eastern agrarian interests. Especially verbal in their attacks upon the scheme were Indiana's James M. Robinson and J. S. Snook of Ohio.[42] Snook painted a dreary picture of the toil which the Ohio homesteader had exerted to claim his land from nature, concluding, "And now you propose to tax him [the Ohio farmer] and the fruits of his unaided toil to build up a great farming section where products will be raised to compete with those he raises."[43] President Roosevelt had already tried to answer Snook's complaint in his message to Congress when he pointed out that he believed the produce raised upon irrigated lands in the West would be locally used.[44] Senator Henry C. Hansborough of North Dakota, who sponsored the reclamation bill in the Senate, echoed the sentiments of the President when he assured

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[41]Hays, Conservation, 13-14; Smythe, The Conquest, 323.

[42]U. S. Congressional Record, 57th Congress, 1st Session, 1902, XXXV, 6722, 6740, 6743, 6745, 6754.

[43]Ibid., 6745.

[44]"First Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 105.

eastern farmers that, "It is the history of irrigation sections that the output of bread foods from irrigated lands rarely meets the local requirements."[45] Senator Thomas Carter of Montana indicated his dissatisfaction with this "unreasonable" Eastern viewpoint when he filibustered the Eastern-supported Ribers and Harbors bill to death.[46]

Easterners also charged that the bill was unconstitutional. Representative Robinson pointed out that giving control of the allocation of funds and projects to the Secretary of the Interior infringed upon Congressional power.[47] Others argued that the cost of the projects--estimated at $3,000,000 a year--was too great an expenditure.[48] To this Roosevelt answered: "It is right for the National Government to make the streams and rivers of the arid regions useful by engineering works for water storage as to make useful the rivers and harbors of the humid region."[49]

With the Newlands bill rewritten to his wishes, Roosevelt staunchly supported it even in the face of opposition from leading eastern Republicans. He indicated his

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[45]U. S. Congressional Record, 57th Congress, 1st Session, 1902, XXXV, 1, 385.

[46]Hays, Conservation, 14.

[47]U. S. Congressional Record, 57th Congress, 1st Session, 1902, XXXV, 6747.

[48]Ibid., 6669.

[49]Quoted in Peffer, The Closing of the Public Domain, 35.

genuine belief in the reclamation proposal when he attempted to sway Speaker of the House Joseph Cannon to his side:

> I do not believe that I have ever before written to an individual legislator in favor of an individual bill, but I break through my rule to ask you as earnestly as I can not to oppose the Irrigation measure. Believe me, this is something of which I have made a careful study, and great and real though my deference is for your knowledge of legislation, and for your attitude in stopping expense, I yet feel from my acquaintance with the far West that it would be a genuine and rankling injustice for the Republican party to kill this measure. I believe in it with all my heart from every standpoint.[50]

Four days after Roosevelt communicated with Speaker Cannon, Congress passed the reclamation bill in June of 1902. By the end of the year, Roosevelt observed that "nothing has been done in which I have taken greater interest during my administration than the inauguration of nationally aided irrigation."[51] It was his vigorous interest that was largely responsible for the successful enactment of reclamation legislation.

The western press lauded the passage of the new reclamation measure. On the day of its enactment, The Denver Post expressed its approval in its front page headline, "It Will Mean Millions to the West."[52] Its editor indicated the importance of the new law to the West when he asserted that it was "the first important concession which the West has

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[50]Roosevelt to Joseph Cannon, June 13, 1902, Roosevelt Papers.

[51]Roosevelt to D. B. Fairly, October 4, 1902, ibid.

[52]The Denver Post, June 13, 1902.

received at the hands of Congress since the U. P. subsidy."[53] The Deseret Evening News believed that the Newlands Act would open up 100,000 to 150,000 acres of land to prospective settlers.[54] The Salt Lake City paper maintained that the entire country would benefit from the passage of the irrigation measure.[55]

The San Francisco Chronicle declared that "the fight has been made on the principle, and the outcome is the commitment of the nation to the policy of so conserving the waters of the public domain" as to insure "production of the largest possible acreage and support of the largest possible population."[56] A Washington editor praised the Newlands Act contending that "a happy and contented, home-loving and home-owning people will occupy the present arid region of the West."[57] These representative opinions from the pages of western newspapers indicated that the West not only rejoiced over the enactment of the irrigation measure, but also believed that the new plan would stimulate the economic development of their section.

What the American farmer himself thought of the

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[53]Ibid., June 14, 1902.

[54]The Deseret Evening News (Salt Lake City), June 23, 1902.

[55]Ibid., June 19, 1902.

[56]San Francisco Chronicle, June 16, 1902.

[57]Ellensburg Dawn (Washington), October 18, 1902, quoted in Robbins, Landed Heritage, 333.

Roosevelt administration's new approach to solving the problem of the western dry lands is difficult to determine. If the Farm Journal editorial page is any indication of "grass roots" farm sentiment, it appears that this sentiment for the most part followed the same geographical split that occurred in Congress.

The praises of the Reclamation Act and of Roosevelt's role in its passage filled the editorial pages of Western farm papers from North Dakota's Goose River Farmer to the Rocky Mountain Husbandman. The Goose River Farmer, published in the plush Red River Valley region, held that the "Newlands Act is the greatest boon to the American farming since Lincoln and the Homestead Act."[58] The Nebraska Farmer related that "the enactment into law of a system for conducting irrigation development on a national scale is a source of satisfaction to us, as it must be to all persons who have at heart the greatest development of our country."[59] This same sentiment was shared by the Kansas Farmer and the Rocky Mountain Husbandman.[60]

In Minnesota, a state that would not directly benefit from the reclamation plan, the two leading agricultural

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[58]Goose River Farmer (Mayville, North Dakota), July 27, 1902.

[59]Nebraska Farmer (Omaha), June 19, 1902. See also January 2, 1902.

[60]Kansas Farmer and Rocky Mountain Husbandman as quoted in Nebraska Farmer, July 17, 1902.

papers were divided as to the merits of the new legislation. The Northwestern Agriculturalist realized that it would not aid its state, but believed that "it is for the good of the future of American farming."[61] On the other hand, the Farm, Stock and Home feared that competition from the new area would hinder farming in the Midwest. The editor also argued that the project would be more costly than the revenue from the sale of land, asserting that it was not fair "to put the cost on the whole country."[62] This Minnesota paper was sure that "it does not reflect the will of the people."[63]

The Twentieth Century Farmer, while supporting the cause of reclamation in the arid West, believed that the "measure is unsound in principle and that . . . it would not accomplish the object sought."[64] This journal maintained that there "is no more imperative duty on the part of the government than that of reclaiming for the benefit of all the people, those portions of the public domain which are arid and at this time unfit for cultivation."[65] However, the editor of the Omaha farm paper disagreed with the law-makers on the financing of irrigation. "We have no doubt,"

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[61] Northwestern Agriculturalist (St. Paul), XVII (June 15, 1902), 244.

[62] Farm, Stock and Home (Minneapolis), XVII (March 15, 1902), 153.

[63] Ibid., (June 15, 1902).

[64] Twentieth Century Farmer (Omaha), February 26, 1902.

[65] Ibid., May 31, 1902.

he affirmed, "that the only wise and sound policy is to nationalize irrigation by making appropriations direct from the national treasury."[66] Nationalization "is the only sound approach to this question."[67]

Farm editors in the East, however, viewed the passage of the act in a different manner. The Ohio Farmer echoed the words of its Congressional representation by raising the question of competition: "Although we favor the development of a greater American farm, there seems to be little need at present for expanding the fields of production to the point of hurting those who presently produce."[68] The problem of regional competition was the main objection also raised by The Tennessee Farmer, the New York Dairyman, and the New England Farmer.[69] It is interesting to note that the Philadelphia Inquirer supported the reclamation plan: "Even the New England farmers . . . can hardly object to a scheme which makes irrigation pay its own way and confines the cost of it to the section it will benefit."[70] The Inquirer's editor was wrong; the New England farmer did object!

After the enactment of the reclamation law, its

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[66] Ibid., February 26, 1902.

[67] Ibid., March 19, 1902. See also, February 5, January 29 and January 1, 1902.

[68] Ohio Farmer, June 17, 1902.

[69] Quoted in Twentieth Century Farmer, May 31, 1902.

[70] Ibid., January 1, 1902.

administration was placed in the hands of the Reclamation Service headed by Frederick H. Newell. From the beginning the President was eager that the administration of the reclamation projects run smoothly and cause as little antagonism as possible. Shortly after he signed the bill, Roosevelt reflected this feeling when he wrote to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, the Secretary of the Interior: "In this irrigation business . . . I should think it would be best to divide up the work among the different states as fairly as possible, and be sure to carry out whatever we undertake."[71] The President was emphatic that "we must not make any slips at the outset."[72]

By 1903 the Secretary of the Interior had authorized four projects, and two years later the Reclamation Service completed its first construction, the Truckee-Carson ditch in Nevada.[73] In 1906 Roosevelt could write to Pinchot that "operations under the Reclamation Act . . . have been carried on energetically during the four years. The Reclamation Service . . . is now handling the work with rapidity and effectiveness."[74] The President pointed out that over 1 million acres had been laid out for irrigation, 200,000 of

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[71]Roosevelt to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, July 2, 1902, Roosevelt Papers.

[72]Ibid.; see also, Autobiography, 388.

[73]Roosevelt to Gifford Pinchot, August 24, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

[74]Roosevelt to Pinchot, August 24, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

which were under irrigation, and that 300 miles of ditches had been completed.[75] Near the end of his administration, Roosevelt optimistically proclaimed that "the success already attained shows that with continued good administration it will be possible to replace in the Treasury the entire investment."[76]

To say, as does Professor Paul Cartright, that "when Roosevelt left office, the reclaiming of waste lands was a complete success,"[77] is to overstate the case. Certainly Roosevelt had a right to be optimistic and proud concerning the record of his administration in this area. There were, however, serious difficulties that arose to interfere with an orderly execution of the reclamation operation. One problem faced by the Reclamation Service was the confusing western water law. Most states in the West adopted the system of prior appropriation of water rights.[78] Anyone could establish a prior appropriation by posting notice and filing a statement of the amount of water claimed with the county officials. He retained his title over all later claimants if he continued to use the water. This method led to much

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[75] Autobiography, 389.

[76] Roosevelt to Ralph Twitchell, June 29, 1908; Roosevelt to Sydney Brooks, December 28, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

[77] Cartright, Theodore Roosevelt, The Naturalist, 168.

[78] William E. Smythe, "The Battle in the States," Out West, XVII (August, 1902), 233.

confusion, since no one knew how much water was available and title was established by county rather than by watershed.[79]

To cope with the problem the Reclamation Service assigned one of its men to deal exclusively with this question. States in the West gradually developed a more systematic approach to water law. Wyoming enacted what the Reclamation Service thought to be the model law. Under it an appointed state engineer decided priorities and granted water rights.[80] Although few states copied the Wyoming plan, it did influence changes in some.

Another thorny situation arose when the Reclamation Service attempted to use one state's water to irrigate another. Many times water in one state could best be used to fill the ditches of its neighbor. However, rarely was this accomplished due to local opposition to federal interference and the desire to use the water in their own state.[81]

Speculation was another factor that interfered with reclamation planning. As soon as the Reclamation Act was signed by the President, all land that potentially could be irrigated was withdrawn by the Secretary of the Interior. Because withdrawals could not immediately be executed, speculators were able to gain much land under land laws other than the Homestead Act.[82]

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[79] Ibid., 235.

[80] Irrigation Age, XXIV (January, 1909), 70.

[81] Conservation, XV (January, 1909), 10.

[82] Peffer, Closing of Public Domain, 42.

President Roosevelt bitterly attacked the speculator when he asserted, "Speculation in lands reclaimed by the Government must be checked at whatever cost. The object of the Reclamation Act is not to make money, but to make homes."[83] Roosevelt's concern for the proper use of existing land legislation, coupled with the exposé of a land fraud ring in Oregon in early 1903,[84] led to his decision to create a public land commission to further study and investigate "the condition, operation, and effect of present land laws, and the use, condition, disposal, and settlement of the public lands."[85]

Roosevelt could indeed write to his friend Pinchot that "we may well congratulate ourselves upon the rapid progress already made [in reclamation], and rejoice that the infancy of the work has been safely passed."[86] Yet it was obvious to Roosevelt, as the report from the land commission would relate, that there was still much to be done in the area of public land reform.

Students of the conservation movement and biographers of Roosevelt all agree that the President played a

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[83]Roosevelt to Gifford Pinchot, August 24, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

[84]Peffer, Closing of the Public Domain, 43-44.

[85]U.S. Department of Interior Annual Reports, 1904 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905), I, 381.

[86]Roosevelt to Pinchot, August 24, 1906, Roosevelt Papers.

paramount role in the passage of reclamation legislation. George Mowry in The Era of Theodore Roosevelt holds that Roosevelt "exerted himself for the Newlands reclamation measure," and that the Congress passed the bill "with Roosevelt's substantial help."[87] Henry F. Pringle asserts that the bill was enacted "with Roosevelt's energetic assistance,"[88] while Roy Robbins gives credit for its passage to the President's "characteristic boldness and vigor."[89] In the same tone, Samuel Hays points to Roosevelt's eager support of the cause.[90]

This unanimous agreement among historians of the era is well founded. Roosevelt did give his energetic and enthusiastic support to the irrigation movement. He identified himself with it and championed the cause in word and deed. While McKinley had avoided the issue, Roosevelt placed the issue squarely before Congress in his first annual message. He actively joined the discussion on the measure and, in the heat of debate, attempted to pressure Speaker Cannon to his viewpoint. Perhaps the editor of The Denver Post best evaluated Roosevelt's role in the passage of the irrigation measure when he wrote:

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[87]Mowry, Era of Theodore Roosevelt, 124-125.

[88]Pringle, Theodore Roosevelt, 302-303.

[89]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 330-331.

[90]Hays, Conservation, 14.

For the happy termination of an endeavor which in its incipiency appeared almost hopeless, the people of the West are very largely indebted to President Roosevelt without whose influence the passage of the bill would have been practically impossible.[91]

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[91] The Denver Post, June 14, 1902.

CHAPTER V

ROOSEVELT'S PUBLIC LAND COMMISSION AND LAND POLICY, 1903-1909

In his second message to Congress in 1902, Roosevelt indicated that he was not satisfied with just the enactment of reclamation legislation. Beyond this, the President maintained, there was a growing need to re-evaluate the entire system of American land law. He believed that "the remaining public lands should be held rigidly for the home builder, the settler who lives on the land, and no one else."[1]

As he had earlier done, he once again denounced the misuse of existing land laws. "In their actual use," said the President, "the desert land law, the timber and stone law, and the commutation clause of the homestead act have been so perverted . . . to permit the acquisition of large areas of the public domain for other than actual settlers . . . ."[2] A related problem concerned grazing. "We should recognize," averred Roosevelt, "that in the grazing region

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[1]"Second Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 161.

[2]Ibid.

the man who corresponds to the homesteader may be unable to settle permanently if only allowed to use the same amount of pastureland that his brother, the homesteader, is allowed to use of arable land."[3] In this message to Congress, Roosevelt touched upon the issues with which his administration would become involved during its remaining years: the reform of existing public land measures, the grazing question, and enlarged homesteads. Toward these ends, the President urged Congress to establish a commission of experts "to investigate and report upon the complicated question involved."[4]

A year later in his third annual message, the President informed Congress that he had appointed a commission to investigate public land problems. The Public Land Commission was composed of Roosevelt's primary adviser on farm matters, Gifford Pinchot; W. A. Richards, commissioner of the General Land Office; and Frederick Newell of the Geological Survey. The commissioners were to

> report especially what changes in organization, laws, regulations, and practices affecting the public lands are needed to effect the largest practicable disposition of the public lands to actual settlers who will build permanent homes upon them, and to secure in permanence the fullest and most effective use of the resources of the public lands.[5]

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[3] Ibid., 162

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid., 192-194.

Throughout late 1903 and early 1904, Pinchot and Newell went into the West to observe conditions there at first hand. They attended the National Livestock Association and the National Wool Growers annual meeting in an attempt to ascertain cattle and sheep raisers' opinions on Government land policy.[6] They traveled throughout the West visiting such cities as Sacramento, Reno, Denver, Salt Lake City, and Cheyene conferring with as many western political and economic leaders as possible. In Washington, the three commissioners held unofficial hearings in Richards' office at the General Land Office discussing public land policy with any interested parties.[7]

By March of 1904 the Commission was ready to report to the President and Congress on certain aspects of their investigations; it was not until almost a year later, however, that the complete report of the Commission was presented to Roosevelt.[8] Both reports pointed to the vast difficulties involved in such an undertaking as the examination of the workings of the public land laws. They reported that some in the West believed that all the land laws should be repealed, while others held that the existing laws were serving the country

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[6]U.S., Congress, Senate, Partial Report of the Public Lands Commission, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, 1904, S. Doc. 188, 2.

[7]Partial Report of the Public Lands Commission, 2.

[8]U.S., Congress, Senate, Report of the Public Lands Commission, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, S. Doc., 189.

well. "Between these two extremes," wrote the Commissioners, "there is a broad middle ground, accepted by the majority of persons who . . . agree that changes should be simplified and codified."[9]

The Commission thought that the basic problem concerning the American land law system was that existing land laws no longer "fit the conditions of the remaining public lands."[10] According to their Report, "these laws are no longer well suited for the most economical and effective disposal of lands to the actual settler."[11] It was the duty of the Commission to recommend changes in the present system that would secure the fullest and most effective use of the public lands to further the cause of settlement by actual settlers.[12]

The Commission recommended seven basic changes in the structure of the public land system. First of all, the commissioners lamented the fact that the agricultural possibilities of the remaining public lands were for the most part unknown. To remedy this situation, the Commission stated firmly that the "first essential for putting the remaining public lands to their best use is to ascertain what the best

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[9]Partial Report of the Public Lands Commission, 3; Report of the Public Lands Commission, xiv.

[10]Partial Report of the Public Lands Commission, 3.

[11]Ibid.

[12]See Roosevelt's "Third Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 192-194.

use is by a preliminary study and classification of them."[13] The commissioners held that "it is of first importance to save the remaining public domain for the actual home builders."[14] But, before extensive revision of the laws could be executed, a classification of remaining public land was necessary "to determine their probable future development by agriculture."[15]

A second recommendation of the Commission was the repeal of the Forest Lieu Land Act of 1897. This act had provided that in cases in which a tract of land patented by a settler was included within the boundaries of a forest reserve, he could relinquish this tract to the government and could select in lieu of it a tract of land open to settlement.[16] The Act of 1897 did not stipulate that the public land selected should compare in value with that relinquished in the exchange. Speculators in the Far West used this act to gain some of the best remaining timber lands of the public domain. Through bogus entries and bribary of local officials they obtained title to much worthless land within school sections. Then, through Washington influence, they were able to have forest reserves created to include the school sections in which their land was located. Using the provisions of the

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[13] Report of the Public Lands Commission, xiv.

[14] Ibid., xiv-xv.

[15] Ibid., xv.

[16] Robbins, Landed Heritage, 339.

Forest Lieu Land Act, they promptly exchanged their worthless land for unreserved forested lands.[17]

The Public Lands Commission related that it found "public opinion in an acute stage" over the frauds carried out under the 1897 act.[18] Although the act was originally passed to safeguard the settler, it "now has led to the acquisition by speculators of much valuable timber and agricultural land."[19] The Commission deemed the repeal of this measure a necessary step towards a more orderly approach to public land law.

Thirdly, because it found the Timber and Stone Act to be "a vehicle for innumerable frauds," the Public Lands Commission called for its immediate repeal by the Congress.[20] Passed in 1878, the Timber and Stone Act provided for the sale of public surveyed lands, "valuable chiefly for timber and stone and unfit for cultivation," in quantities of 160 acres at the minimum price of $2.50 per acre.[21] The passage of this act seemed to spur on fraudulent appropriations of valuable reserves. Only two years after its enactment, the

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[17] Ibid., 339-340; John Ise, The United States Forest Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1920), 189; Lincoln Steffens, "The Taming of the West," American Magazine, XIV (September, 1907), 489-505.

[18] Report of the Public Lands Commission, xv.

[19] Ibid., xv.

[20] Ibid., xvi.

[21] Robbins, Landed Heritage, 288.

Public Lands Commission of 1879 called for its repeal.[22] Now, twenty-five years later, another Commission echoed the recommendation of its earlier counterpart. The commissioners found in their investigation that from 1878 to 1904 over 55,000 claims had been filed for 7,500,000 acres of land under the Timber and Stone Act and that "many transfers of land patented were made immediately upon completion of the title--often on the same day."[23] Thorough studies of the workings of this act in representative counties in Oregon revealed that well over half of the patented land had fallen into the hands of just a few timber and mill corporations.[24]

A fourth area of reform recommended by the Commission was modification of the commutation clause of the Homestead Act of 1862.[25] The Commission reiterated what others had said since the inception of the act in the 1860's, when it reported that there was a "rapid increase of the use of this expedient for passing public lands into the hands of corporations or large land owners." It was obvious upon first hand observations, stated the Report, that "a great part of all commuted homesteads remain uninhabited," and that "the number of patents furnishes no index to the number of new homes."[26]

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[22]U.S., Congress, House, Report of the Public Lands Commission, 46th Congress, 2nd Session, 1880, H. Ex. Doc. 46,9.

[23]Report of the Public Lands Commission, xvi.

[24]Ibid., 63-64.

[25]Ibid., xvii.

[26]Ibid., xvii.

The Commission's study of the situation indicated that almost 90 per cent of commuted homesteads were transferred within three months after acquisition of the title, and that about 60 per cent of those who commuted their homesteads left the state in which it was located.[27]

A special investigator studied the workings of the commutation clause in Minnesota. He revealed that in the state's agricultural belt only 32 per cent of homesteads were commuted.[28] In the timber belt, however, almost 90 per cent were transferred to other parties, while in the "prospective mineral belt" almost 97 per cent of all commuted entries were transferred within 1.2 months, the average time between date of proof and date of transfer.[29]

A study of Ward County, North Dakota, of which Minot is the county seat, indicated that the "rate of commutation was surprisingly high in North Dakota."[30] In this northwestern county of the state, almost 90 per cent of all proofs made on homesteads were perfected under the commutation clause of the Homestead Act. It was also estimated that 60 per cent of those "homesteaders" left the state.[31] The study showed that many were Canadians who indicated their intention of

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 68.

[29] Ibid., 67-68.

[30] Ibid., 72-73.

[31] Ibid., 73.

citizenship to gain land, and after making a profit by the land transfer, went home to Canada.[32]

One investigator found that "one agent alone obtained . . . 90 patents on commuted entries between September 2, 1902, and March 30, 1904, totaling 13,000 acres."[33] In such cases the act established to promote homesteading was indeed retarding it.

In an attempt to terminate this long lived abuse of the Homestead Act, the Commission recommended that the Congress establish a "three year actual living period" on the land and that the term "residence" be more strictly defined to reduce fraud.[34] The Public Lands Commission believed that this action would curb the misuse of the commutation clause of the Act.

The Desert Land Act was the fifth target of the Commission's reform recommendations. The Desert Land Law as it was originally enacted called for the purchase of 640 acres of land if the settler would irrigate it within three years after filing. Only one entry could be made per person, and no assignments of rights were allowed.[35] In 1891 the acreage was reduced to 320.[36] The Commission pointed out that "the

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[32]Ibid., 74, xviii.

[33]Ibid., 75.

[34]Ibid., xviii.

[35]Robbins, Landed Heritage, 219.

[36]Ibid., 296-297.

most common form of attempted evasion . . . is for two or three individuals to form themselves into a corporation, each individual of the corporation securing . . . 320 acres of such land, and the corporation as such 320 acres."[37] Investigation revealed that many would then establish another corporation and gain another 320 acres.[38]

The Public Lands Commission suggested the act be modified by the inclusion of four new stipulations: (1) that the claimant be required to show he had made the entry for his own use and not for the benefit of any corporation, (2) that the acreage be reduced from 320 to 160, and that the Secretary of the Interior be given the power to further reduce the acreage "where it is apparent that intensive cultivation is practicable," (3) that actual living on the land for two years be required before patent, (4) and that the actual production of a crop be required on not less than 25 per cent of the entry.[39] This would bring to an end, a "convenient vehicle for evading the spirit of the law."[40]

The question of agricultural land in the forest reserves was the sixth area to receive examination by the Commission. The committee realized that regardless of the careful manner of determining reserve boundaries it was inevitable

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[37] Report of the Public Lands Commission, xix.

[38] Ibid., 78-86.

[39] Ibid., xix.

[40] Ibid.

that some agricultural land would be included in the forest reserves.[41] In the interest of promoting settlement, the Commission recommended that these lands be opened to entry under the following conditions: (1) that the Secretary ascertain, describe, and list such land, (2) that the lands be disposed of under the machinery of the Homestead Act, (3) that the lands be used for cultivation and not for timber or grazing, (4) that the commutation clause of the Homestead Act not apply to these lands.

The last of the areas studied by the Roosevelt Commission concerned the growing problem of the West--grazing. Much of the land of the public domain--estimated by the Commission at 300 million acres[42]--was of chief value for grazing for it showed no chance of irrigation due to geographical factors. Vacant public lands were considered to be "open common" and were theoretically free to the use of all citizens.[43] In the West the cattle and sheep men had parcelled out by rather indefinite compacts large portions of the land. This resulted in "constant conflicts" and a "general disorderliness."[44] This, coupled with "the lack of

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[41] Partial Report of the Public Lands Commission, 7. These recommendations concerning the disposal of land in the forest reserves for agricultural purposes were made in the partial report and only referred back to in the Report of 1905.

[42] Report of the Public Lands Commission, xxi.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

control in the use of the public grazing lands, has resulted . . . in over grazing and the ruin of millions of acres."[45]

The Commission's investigation of the grazing question indicated that most cattle and sheep men desired government control of the grazing lands. Of 1,400 Western cattle and sheep men questioned on government control of grazing lands, 1,090 replied that they favored it.[46] Only a small minority maintained a "let us alone" attitude.[47]

Based upon their first hand observations in the West and upon the general attitude of Westerners, the Commission concluded that "control is necessary at once."[48] Therefore, it recommended two proposals: (1) that authority be given to the President to set aside grazing districts or reserves, (2) that the Secretary of Agriculture be authorized to classify and appraise the grazing value of these lands, to appoint officials to charge and collect moderate fees for grazing permits, and to apply definite regulations for each district.[49]

The Public Lands Commission in these recommendations addressed itself not only to plugging loopholes in the law, but, perhaps more important, to devising new laws that would

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[45] Ibid.

[46] Ibid., 17.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid., xxii.

[49] Ibid.

assure an orderly disposal and development of the public domain. Although Congress enacted only two of the Commission's suggestions,[50] by the end of the Roosevelt administration progress had been made toward the achievement of other Commission proposals.

The two recommendations that did receive Congressional approval were the repeal of the Forest Lieu Land Act of 1897 and the passage of the Forest Homestead Act of 1906. It was evident that the Public Lands Commission had correctly evaluated the workings of the Lieu Land Act, and had captured the Western sentiment toward the Act when it labeled it "acute." By 1905 most Western Congressmen sensing the spirit of public opinion in the West supported a repeal measure. With little comment, the repeal act was passed.[51] This action mollified Westerners who believed that the law had done more to aid speculators than settlers and indicated that the Congress was influenced by the findings of the Public Lands Commission.

Perhaps a better example of Congressional reaction to the suggestions of the Commission was the enactment in June of 1906 of the Forest Homestead Bill. This act embodied

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[50]Louise Peffer is in error when she states that the Congress enacted only one of the Commission's proposals. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the forest homestead proposal was in the Partial Report rather than the Report of 1905. See Peffer, Public Domain, 47.

[51]U.S., Congressional Record, 58th Congress, 3rd Session, 1905, XL, 4034-37; see also 58th Congress, 1st Session, 1904, XXXVIII, 1169, 5728.

every suggestion that the Commission made including the condition that the commutation clause of the Homestead Act not apply.[52] During the remaining years of the Roosevelt administration almost 1,500,000 acres were taken up by homesteaders under the provisions of the Forest Homestead Bill.

Although Congress repealed the Forest Lieu Land Act and provided for homesteads in forest areas, no action was taken to repeal the Timber and Stone Act or the Desert Land Act and the commutation clause of the Homestead Act. The question of these three land laws was raised several times in Congress after the study of the Commission; it was clear, however, that Congress was in no mood to tamper with the existing land law structure.

In debate on the laws, Western Congressmen defended all three as being essential to the continued growth and development of the West.[53] Senator Henry Hansbrough of North Dakota expressed the Western viewpoint when he asserted that "the desert land law is absolutely necessary for irrigation through privats enterprise."[54] Senator Dubois of Idaho presented the old theme of the "poor settler," maintaining that repeal or change of existing laws would be a strike against the honest homesteader.[55]

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[52] U.S., Statutes At Large, XXXIV, Part I, 233-234.

[53] U.S., Congressional Record, 58th Congress, 2nd Session, 1903-1904, XXXVIII, 3662-3675.

[54] Ibid., 3663.

[55] Ibid., 3674.

North Dakota's Hansbrough, self-appointed defender of the commutation clause, argued that repeal of the clause would force the settler to abandon his land before five years:

> If the settler is required to reside upon the land five years without having the opportunity of borrowing a cent of money because he has no title to the land, and therefore he can give no security, and should meet with misfortune, as most settlers do, such as fire, sickness, loss of crop, etc., what would become of the five year settler.[56]

In similar tone like many other Western Senators, Dubois expressed skepticism over the Commission's continued references to fraud: "Our people have gone on the public domain and taken up farms. They have taken them mostly under the desert land law, and I have never known a case of fraud in Idaho."[57]

In the absence of Congressional action, Roosevelt in December of 1906 presented a special message to the nation's legislators. He called for "immediate action to recast the public-land laws."[58] Once again he reiterated his discontent with the Timber and Stone Act, the Desert Land Act, and the commutation clause of the Homestead Act. Because of what he termed "grave concern," the President related his plan of action in dealing with the unsolved land law problem:

> There is but one way by which the fraudulent acquisition of these lands can be definitely stopped,

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[56] Ibid., 3663.

[57] Ibid., 3674.

[58] U.S., Congress, Senate, Message of the President of the U.S. Relative to Public Land Law, 59th Congress, 2nd Session, 1906, S. Doc. 141, p. 1.

> and, therefore, I have directed the Secretary of the Interior to allow no patent to be issued until by an examination on the ground actual compliance with that law has been found to exist.[59]

This would prove to be a slow and costly plan. However, with the lack of Congressional action, the President deemed such a measure necessary. It was obvious to Roosevelt that Congress was not going to respond to his pleas for change.

It was also apparent that nothing would be done by Congress in the area of grazing control legislation. Both the Public Lands Commission and Roosevelt stressed the need for a systematic approach to the question through new national legislation. In December of 1905, Roosevelt advocated the passage of a grazing control law, when he declared:

> The best use of the public grazing-lands requires the careful examination and classification of these lands in order to give each settler land enough to support his family and no more. While this work is being done, and until the lands are settled, the government should take control of the open range, under reasonable regulations suited to local needs, following the general policy already in successful operation on the forest reserves.[60]

In response seven bills were introduced but with no success.[61] Typical of the measures brought before the Congress was one which would have authorized the President, with the consent

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[59] Ibid., 2.

[60] "Fifth Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 315.

[61] U.S., Congressional Record, 59th Congress, 1st Session, 1906, XL, 23, 58, 61.

of the governor of the states involved, to establish grazing districts on the public domain. Such districts would be administered by the secretary of Agriculture who would charge and collect reasonable fees for permits.[62] Like the other grazing bills, the Burkett bill died in committee.

Although no program for the control of grazing on the public domain was established during the Roosevelt years, after the transfer of the forest reserves from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture in 1905, that Department did set up a grazing control program in its newly acquired forest reserves.[63] Secretary Wilson announced that fees for grazing cattle would range from 20 to 35 cents in the summer and 35 to 50 cents for the whole year, while sheep fees would be 5 to 8 cents for the summer only. The regulations also provided for half-rate fees for the small operators.[64]

In granting grazing permits applicants were given preference in the following order: (1) small nearby owners, (2) other occupants of the reserve range, (3) owners of transient stock.[65] The new plan also called for the development of trails and watering places. Secretary Wilson wrote

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[62]Phillip O. Foss, Politics and Grass, The Administration of Grazing on the Public Domain (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), 42.

[63]James Wilson to Theodore Roosevelt, December 20, 1905, Papers of the Secretary.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Ibid.

to the President in December of 1906 that "special effort has been made . . . to foster home building and promote the interest of the small owner at every point."[66] In response to the Secretary's letter, the President reflected his "homesteader bias" when he replied:

> The forest reserves are to be used as among the most potent influences in favor of the actual home maker of the men with a few dozen or few score head of cattle, which he has gathered by his own industry and is himself caring for. This is the hand of man upon whom the foundations of our civilization rest and it is eminently proper to favor him in every way.[67]

The leasing plan executed in the forest reserves by the Department of Agriculture was termed by Roosevelt "an assured success."[68] It was, however, only a meager beginning toward a national grazing policy. It would be almost thirty years later--under another Roosevelt--that a national grazing control policy would finally be enacted by the Congress.[69]

The Roosevelt years also witnessed the "enlarged homestead" approach to the problem of the arid Western lands. The cause of "enlarged homesteads" was championed by Moses Kinkaid, Congressman from Nebraska. With no opposition,

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[66]Wilson to Roosevelt, December 20, 1905, ibid.

[67]Roosevelt to Wilson, December 21, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[68]U.S., Congress, Senate, Message of the President of the U.S. Relative to Public Land Law, 59th Congress, 2nd Session, 1906, S. Doc. 141, 2.

[69]See Foss, Politics and Grass, Chapter 3, for a discussion of the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934.

Kinkaid's bill became law in April of 1904. It provided for homesteads of 640 acres to be acquired by five years of residence and improvements valued at $800. The act applied only to the arid lands of Western Nebraska.[70]

The Kinkaid Act was experimental to see if an increase in the quantity of land to compensate for lack of productiveness might be the answer to the West's arid homestead problem. Almost immediately bills were introduced to extend the Kinkaid Act to other states,[71] but Congress refused to respond desiring to see first if the Kinkaid Act would work in Nebraska.

Greater interest in the "enlarged homestead" concept was stimulated by the introduction and development of dry farming. So great was the success of this method in Western Kansas that land considered incapable of production was producing crops.[72] Excitement over the new approach to dry land farming forced the Department of Agriculture to caution settlers that this new process was not a new road to wealth or fortune.[73]

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[70]U.S., Statutes At Large, XXXIII, Part I, 547. See also Addison E. Sheldon, Land Systems and Land Policies in Nebraska (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1936), 156-157.

[71]See A. R. Reynolds, "The Kinkaid Act and Its Effects on Western Nebraska," Agricultural History, XXIII (January, 1949), 20-29.

[72]See Mary W. N. Hargreaves, "Dry Farming Alias Scientific Farming," Agricultural History, XXII (January, 1948), 39-56.

[73]Peffer, Public Domain, 143.

By 1909 when the first Kinkaid homesteads came subject to proof, there were indications that the Kinkaid Act was a solution to homesteading at least some sections of the dry West. Commissioner Dennett traveled from the General Land Office in Washington to observe at first hand development of enlarged homesteads. In his report he admitted that he was "agreeably surprised at the successful homesteading which had been done under its [the Kinkaid Act's] terms."[74]

No doubt this apparent success of the Kinkaid Act was responsible for the enactment of the Enlarged Homestead Act in February of 1909. This act permitted a 320-acre entry on nonirrigable land of which one-sixteenth of the acreage had to be cultivated by the end of the second year and one-eighth by the end of the third. It is significant to note that both the Kinkaid Act and the Enlarged Homestead Act provided that the commutation clause of the Homestead Act not apply.[75]

As Theodore Roosevelt left office in March of 1909, he could look back over some significant changes in American public land policy. His own belief that homes and settlement must be protected and promoted by land laws was at the heart of every accomplished reform. The Reclamation Act of 1902, the repeal of the Forest Lieu Land Act, the Forest Homestead

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[74] Report of the Commissioner of the General Land Office, 1909, as quoted in Sheldon, Land Systems, 161.

[75] U.S., Statutes At Large, XXXVI, Part I, 53.

Act, and the enlarged homestead measures placed a premium upon the welfare of the settler--the "actual settler" as Roosevelt called him.

Roosevelt's attitudes and policies concerning the public domain indicate that he sought both to protect the interests of the homesteader and to establish and orderly and methodical land policy. From his "Second Annual Message" to his exit from office, Roosevelt constantly called upon Congress to re-examine existing land policy and to enact reform legislation. The President singled out the Desert Land Act, the Timber and Stone Act, and the commutation clause of the Homestead Act for special consideration, and emphasized the need for grazing control on the public domain.

To illustrate the seriousness of the question, Roosevelt called a commission of experts to study land policy problems and to make necessary suggestions for change. When Congress failed to respond to the recommendations of the President and his Public Lands Commission, Roosevelt ordered the Secretary of the Interior to allow no new patents until compliance with the law could be observed at first hand.

Although Roosevelt's demands for reform went unheeded, new homestead legislation such as the Forest Homestead Act and the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 was drawn up according to the recommendations of the President's Public Lands Commission. At the same time, a grazing control program was begun by the Department of Agriculture in the nation's forest reserves.

Just as Roosevelt had actively supported reclamation legislation, he presented himself as the champion of land law reform. In all these actions and attitudes, the President and his administration were motivated to act by the progressive impulse to protect the "small man" from the corporations and "interests," by the scientific impulse to bring land policy into an orderly structure administered by professionals, and by the human impulse to see America's domain treated with respect.

CHAPTER VI

THE COUNTRY LIFE COMMISSION: ITS ORGANIZATION AND WORK

During the last years of his administration, Roosevelt turned his attention to the question of rural life. The President and Sir Horace Plunkett had talked about country life problems as early as 1905 and 1906, and Roosevelt was keenly interested in Plunkett's pamphlet, The Problem of Rural Life in the United States, in which the Irish agriculturalist called for a study of American country life conditions. Gifford Pinchot revealed Plunkett's role in promoting such a study group when in 1908 he wrote: "Some of these days it will be known that you [Plunkett] are the man who stirred up the whole movement in America."[1]

Roosevelt's "The Man Who Works With His Hands" address of 1907 indicated the President's concern for farm matters other than the actual production of crops. In that speech Roosevelt had pointed to the need for better agricultural education, the application of science to farming, and a more professional attitude toward the vocation of farming. The most revolutionary aspect of this address was his

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[1]Pinchot to Plunkett, May 29, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

assertion that "it [U.S.D.A.] has been dealing with growing crops. It must hereafter deal also with living men.[2] His letter which in 1908 would inauguarate a commission to study rural life was an expansion of this theme.

At about the same time that Roosevelt delivered the Lansing speech, there was apparently an attempt by Pinchot and Plunkett to establish a bureau of rural life in the Department of Agriculture.[3] Although the plan had the support of the Chief Executive, Secretary Wilson was cool to the idea. His concept of his department's function did not include rural life problems as he indicated to Senator J. P. Dolliver: "The President broke some new ground, and wants me to take up the question of the family as well as the farm. I have been thinking that the Christian church was doing that pretty well."[4] To one who knew Wilson's manner of expression and writing, this clearly inferred that he was not interested in the President's new idea. The Secretary's opposition to the scheme brought it to an abrupt end. Later Pinchot wrote to Plunkett that "unfortunately the President's attempt . . . to get the new point of view translated into action in the

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[2]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 129-133, 137.

[3]No existing correspondence relates directly to this question. Letters which indirectly refer to it are, Pinchot to Plunkett, December 3, 1907, May 29, 1908, and Liberty H. Bailey to Pinchot, March 14, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[4]Wilson to J. P. Dolliver, June 3, 1907, Papers of the Secretary.

Agriculture Department had no valuable result. Secretary Wilson simply does not see it."[5]

Thwarted in this attempt, Pinchot turned to the popular Rooseveltian style of investigating national problems, the commission. Just as the commission had served a useful purpose for the study of public land in 1903, now in 1908 it would be used to examine the rural problems of the country.

The organization of such a group, however, turned out to be a slow process. In the early spring of 1908 Roosevelt met with Pinchot and Plunkett and decided to call together a commission "as a means for directing the attention of the nation to the problems of the farmer, and for securing the necessary knowledge of the actual conditions of life in the open country."[6]

Pinchot served as the chief architect of the commission. Although he was overburdened with the work of his bureau, he carried out the task of organization and selection of the membership. In this, he was aided by Professor Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell University who had long been interested in farm conditions. The Pinchot-Bailey friendship went back several years, and both men had worked together on a commission which investigated the duplication of research by the state and federal experiment stations.[7]

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[5]May 29, 1908, Pinchot Papers

[6]Pinchot, Breaking New Ground, 340-344.

[7]Liberty H. Bailey to David Starr Jordon, April 2, 1907; to Pinchot, April 23, 1907, Pinchot Papers.

Bailey expressed his concern for the problems of rural life as early as 1896 when he stated the need for a study of the question, writing that "it is impossible really to extend the Experiment Station and the University impulse to the people . . . without first studying the fundamental difficulties of the farmer's social and political environment."[8] In 1906 with several colleagues, Bailey carried out an intensive study of Tompkins County, New York, in which they surveyed such matters as size of farms, the abandonment of farms, the role of farm women, the education of farm children, and various labor problems.[9] Bailey fully sympathized with the idea of a Country Life Commission, and was a "natural" to work with Pinchot in its organization.

Correspondence between Pinchot and Bailey concerning the organization of the commission began in March of 1908, when Bailey agreed to help Pinchot and expressed his support of the commission concept. "The more I think over the commission matter," he wrote, "the more I think it to be the wisest move that can be made at the present time."[10]

In an attempt to move quickly toward organization, Pinchot and Bailey met with the President on April 10. At

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[8]Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin, No. 112 (December, 1896), 534.

[9]Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station, An Agricultural Survey of Tompkins County, New York, Bulletin, No. 295 (March, 1911).

[10]Bailey to Pinchot, March 14, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

this conference it appears that Bailey volunteered his services as chairman of the commission.[11] The three also agreed that Pinchot and Kenyon Butterfield, President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, would be on the commission along with "a couple of members . . . to be chosen, one from the South and one from the West."[12]

By the end of June the commission had still not organized. Pinchot apologized to the President for not having "ghost written" the letter of call to the commission and for his delay in selecting the other members of the group. At this time he also expressed concern that "if the Commission were allowed to consist of the three men named, it would . . . be too academic in character to get the proper kind of recognition."[13]

A month later at the suggestion of Secretary Wilson, the "genuine farm touch" was added to the membership of the Commission with the appointment of Henry Wallace, editor of Wallace's Farmer of Des Moines.[14] To round out the membership Pinchot advised the addition of Walter Hines Page, Southern-born editor of World's Work. Page's magazine was

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[11]See Clayton Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," Agricultural History, XXXIV (October, 1960), 155-172.

[12]Pinchot to Plunkett, May 29, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[13]Pinchot to Roosevelt, June 29, 1908, ibid.

[14]Roosevelt to James Wilson, August 5, 1908, ibid.

noted for its interest in farm problems.[15] Thus, with the membership list completed, on August 10th Roosevelt summoned his commission of experts to begin its task of investigating American farm life.

In his letter which inauguarated the new study group, the President acknowledged that American farmers were "better off" in 1908 than they ever had been before. The problem, thought Roosevelt, was that the "social and economic institutions of the open country are not keeping pace with the development of the nation as a whole."[16]

In elaborating upon the question facing "not only agriculture but the nation" the President explained that

> practically the whole of this effort [work of U.S.D.A.] has hitherto been directed toward increasing the production of crops. Our attention has been concentrated almost exclusively on getting better farming. In the beginning this was unquestionably the right thing to do . . . . But when this has been secured, the effort for better farming should cease to stand alone, and should be accompanied by the effort for better business and better living on the farm . . . . Good crops are of little value to the farmer unless they open the door to a good kind of life on the farm.[17]

Like the Public Lands Commission of five years before, the President viewed the new Commission as a fact-finding and

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[15]Roosevelt to Pinchot, August 15, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[16]Roosevelt to L. H. Bailey, Henry Wallace, Kenyon Butterfield, Gifford Pinchot, and Walter H. Page, August 10, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

[17]Ibid.

advisory body. He charged the Commission with the task of reporting "upon the present condition of country life, upon what means are now available for supplying the deficiencies which exist, and upon the best methods of organized permanent effort in investigation."[18]

Roosevelt emphasized the importance of the Country Life Commission's work when he asserted that "with the single exception of the conservation of our natural resources, which underlies the problem of rural life, there is no other material question of greater importance now before the American people."[19]

In a surprising move, however, Professor Bailey torpedoed the President's plans by rejecting the invitation to serve on the commission. Bailey explained this unexpected action which caught both Roosevelt and Pinchot off guard in a letter to the President:

> I can not possibly accept service on the Commission. I do this with exceeding regret because I know how important the work is; but there are limits to what a man can do. There are good men on the Commission and I am not at all necessary to the work. . . . It is now only two weeks until the advanced lot of students will begin to come in and I must be here to take care of them. I have been obliged to cancel all outside engagements for the next year.[20]

Although the Cornell professor gave the fast-approaching school year as the excuse for his action, the causes

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[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Bailey to Pinchot, August 12, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

appear to be more serious. Bailey was a scientific-minded professional botanist and horticulturalist who viewed the investigation of American country life as a serious fact-finding mission. He may well have been concerned about the superficiality of investigating such a mammoth question in just two months. Later correspondence between himself and Pinchot also indicated that the publicity which the Commission would receive greatly concerned Bailey. Both Roosevelt and Pinchot believed that "one of the principal attentions of our work must be to attract public attention to the needs of the situation."[21]

Bailey sharply disagreed with this emphasis upon publicity, averring that

> the publicity end of it does not appeal to me as it apparently does to you. Personally I shrink from the publicity of such matters as this. I do not see how the publicity in the newspapers could be of any service to the Commission. I am inclined to think that it might be quite the reverse.[22]

Professor Bailey's philosophy conflicted with that of the President. Bailey believed that the work of the Commission should be a scientific experiment. On the other hand, the President thought that the scientific experiment would fail if it did not focus the attention of the nation on the problems of rural life.

Both Pinchot and Roosevelt applied pressure attempting

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[21]Bailey to Pinchot, August 12, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[22]Pinchot to Bailey, September 1, September 4, 1908, ibid.

to change Bailey's mind. Pinchot wrote Bailey a letter which the forester termed "as strong a letter as I know how to write."[23] Pinchot believed that Bailey would reverse his earlier decision because "he is too big a man to allow the overstrain from overwork to cloud his judgment to that ex-tent."[24]

The Bailey refusal greatly disappointed Roosevelt. To bring Bailey into line, the President impatiently waved his "big stick" at the Cornell educator:

> Yes, my dear Mr. Bailey, by your action you are doing all you can to hurt this great opportunity. You have no right to do it, my dear sir. It is imperative from the standpoint of the work that you and I have so much at heart that you should accept the chairmanship of this commission . . . . I certainly expect that you will serve.[25]

Just as Japan and Russia had come to terms in 1905 and the coal mine operators with the miners in 1902, so now Bailey yielded under the pressure of the "big stick." Within a week he notified the President that he would serve as chairman of the Country Life Commission.[26]

Still another problem arose to delay the work of the Commission. Several Southern newspapers attacked the makeup

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[23]This "strong letter" does not appear in the Pinchot files. See Pinchot to Kenyon Butterfield, August 21, 1908, ibid.

[24]Pinchot to Kenyon Butterfield, August 21, 1908, ibid.

[25]Roosevelt to Bailey, August 14, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

[26]Bailey to Roosevelt, August 20, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

of the Commission because it contained no Southern representatives. A Dallas newspaper illustrated this sentiment when it lamented that "the one weak point about it is that all of them [do not have] any acquaintance with the discouraging conditions in the very part of the country in which such investigation is most needed."[27] The politically-sensitive Roosevelt immediately advised Pinchot that "I think it very important that we should put on a real southern man, and that he should be a farmer and not the president of a university. . . . Better a Georgian or North Carolinian than a man from further north."[28] The President later ordered Pinchot to "not hereafter put down Walter H. Page as Editor of World's Work, New York. Let it rest as Walter H. Page of North Carolina."[29]

In accordance with Roosevelt's request, by the first part of November, C. S. Barrett, President of the Farmers' Educational and Co-operative Union from Union City, Georgia, was added to the Commission to represent the deep South.[30] At the same time, William Beard, the editor of Great West

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[27]Dallas Semi-weekly News, August 13, 1908.

[28]Roosevelt to Pinchot, September 1, 1908, Pinchot Papers. See also, Roosevelt to Pinchot, August 15, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

[29]Roosevelt to Pinchot, November 12, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[30]Roosevelt to C. S. Barrett, November 11, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. C. S. Barrett to Roosevelt, November 17, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

Magazine from California, joined the group giving the Far West a voice in the study.[31] Finally, the Commission was ready to begin its work in November of 1908.

Perhaps a little worried about farm acceptance of this "expert" commission, Roosevelt decided to brief the Commission once more as to its objectives and functions. In the last communication between the President and the members of the Commission, the Chief Executive stressed that "it is essential that the farmers . . . should feel a sense of ownership in this Commission, should feel that you gentlemen in a very truth represent them and are responsive to their desires and wishes, no less than to their needs."[32] Roosevelt asserted that the Commission must "get in touch with the farmer." He reminded the members of the group that

> Your purpose is neither to investigate the farmer, nor to inquire into technical methods of farming. You are simply trying to ascertain what are the general, economic, social, education, and sanitary conditions themselves, and how the government can help them. To this end your especial desire is to get in touch with and represent the farmers themselves.[33]

With the President's words of advice ringing in their ears, the members of the Commission boarded the train for College Park, Maryland, the first point of investigation.

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[31]Roosevelt to William Beard, November 11, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. William Beard to Roosevelt, November 20, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[32]Roosevelt to Henry Wallace, November 9, 1908, Roosevelt Papers. Identical communications were sent to all the members of the Commission.

[33]Ibid.

In order to complete its work within the two months allotted by the President, the Commission devised three techniques of investigation. One method employed was the questionnaire to secure farm opinions on the main aspects of country life. The Commission mailed over a half million to names furnished by the Department of Agriculture.[34] The questionnaire was written to gain information on the condition of farm homes, rural education, the economic return of farming, the adequacy of railroads and highways, telephone and postal service, business and banking services, the role of the farm wife, the supply of farm labor, sanitation, and rural social life.[35] By the end of the Commission's study, over 115,000 persons had replied "mostly with much care and with every good faith."[36]

The second procedure developed to study the difficulties of rural life was the public hearing. These were held in 30 cities from Boston in the East to Los Angeles in the West, from Minneapolis in the North to Athens, Georgia, in the South. The Commission attempted to keep these hearings informal and encouraged all people interested in agriculture to testify. Although most of the persons in attendance were

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[34]Bailey Statement, October 3, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[35]U.S. Congress, Senate, Report of the Country Life Commission, 60th Congress, 2nd Session, 1909, S. Doc. 705, 26.

[36]Ibid., 27.

farmers, country doctors, ministers, postal men, and school teachers contributed to the discussions. In some cases governors and other high state officials testified at the hearings.[37] The editor of the Northwestern Agriculturalist who spoke at the Minneapolis hearing, commented upon the excellent attendance and praised Bailey's handling of the hearing. This editor was convinced that this type of procedure would "open the way to more thorough forms of study."[38]

The third device was what Roosevelt termed the "school house idea." In early November, the President suggested to the Commission that the people of the country should gather together in the nation's school houses to discuss the questions under investigation.[39] The Commission accepted the President's plan and sent circulars to all the county and state educational superintendents explaining the procedure. Some states even set aside special days for the discussion of rural problems. The report of the Commission indicated that it received many communications from these school house study

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[37]The cities visited were: College Park, Md., Richmond, Va., Raleigh, N.C., Athens, Ga., Spartanburg, S.C., Knoxville, Tenn., Lexington, Ky., Washington, D.C., Dallas, Tex., El Paso, Tex., Tuscon, Ariz., Los Angeles, Fresno, San Francisco, Sacramento, Calif., Reno, Nev., Portland, Ore., Salt Lake City, Utah, Spokane, Wash., Cheyene, Wyo., Bozeman, Mont., Denver, Colo., Omaha, Nebr., Council Bluffs, Iowa, Minneapolis, Minn., Madison, Wis., Champaign, Ill., Ithica, N.Y., Springfield and Boston, Mass.

[38]Northwestern Agriculturalist, XXII (December 19, 1908), 10.

[39]Roosevelt to Henry Wallace, November 9, 1908, Roosevelt Papers.

groups and that this added greatly to the volume of facts on rural life.[40]

The Commission began and ended its work with the general support of the American public and press. Most agricultural editors heaped unqualified praise upon the work of Roosevelt's commission. The Progressive Farmer, published in North Carolina, typified this vigorous support when it editorialized:

> Our conviction is that the Commission will accomplish untold good by directing the attention not only of the national Government, but of our home people to the pressing needs of rural life . . . . It is high time, anyhow, for the South to get over this morbid and babyish sensitiveness about the publication of every statistical fact that doesn't please our passing fancy . . . . In heaven's name, let's have done with our quack, popularity hunting doctors and leaders who tell us there is nothing the matter with us, that we are the greatest and happiest people on earth.[41]

A St. Louis farm journal concurred and added that "President Roosevelt's appointment of a commission to study American farm life . . . is in line with his great work for the preservation of national resources."[42]

The editor of a Nebraska farm paper lauded Roosevelt and the commission plan asserting that "this is not a politi-

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[40]Bailey wrote to Roosevelt that the President should proclaim a national holiday for nationwide discussion. The President replied: "We must not expose ourselves to the danger of having the Commission laughed at." November 7, 1908, ibid.

[41]The Progressive Farmer (Raleigh, North Carolina), quoted in Literary Digest, XXXVII (December 26, 1908), 965.

[42]Independent Farmer and Western Swine Breeder (St. Louis), August 13, 1908, 8.

cal question, but is a national problem and President Roosevelt is adding another star to his constellation."[43] In Ohio, an agricultural editor encouraged all its readers to think seriously about the questions drawn up by the Commission and to write reports for the study group to use.[44]

The Texas Farmer described the creation of the Commission as "an inspiration on the part of the President,"[45] while the American Cultivator believed that "it is the first time that the farmers in a body have ever had a chance to get into touch with the leaders of the nation's law making."[46] From North Dakota came word that "the countryside is afire with praises for the President and his experiment in democracy."[47]

A few farm papers supported the work of the Commission with reservations. The Northwestern Agriculturalist held that while the concept of the commission was sound, it was skeptical if the answers to farm problems could be ascertained in only two months.[48] The Nebraska Farmer cited the need for a study, but hoped that "Uncle Henry" Wallace would

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[43]Nebraska Farmer, LXVI, (August 26, 1908), 720.

[44]Ohio Farmer, November 28, 1908.

[45]Texas Farmer (Dallas), quoted in Literary Digest, XXXVII (December 26, 1908), 965.

[46]American Cultivator (Boston), quoted in ibid.

[47]North Dakota Farmer (Fargo), VII (October, 1908), 14.

[48]Northwestern Agriculturalist, XXII (September 26, 1908), 6.

not use his position on the commission to benefit his own farm journal.[49] The Nebraska editor did not desire to be scooped by its most immediate rival, Wallace's Farmer.

Only a small part of the agrarian press frowned upon the Roosevelt approach to farm life. The Maine Farmer disliked what it termed "an act of class distinction." "It was a mistake," protested its editor, "that the farmer should have been singled out as a class for special reformatory work . . ., and be held up in the public eye as being in ignominious need of missionary reclamation."[50] In similar tone an Ohio journal advocated that the city needed an investigation more than the farm, observing that "it does not seem necessary to shed very many tears of sympathy and commiseration over the supposedly disconsolate and woebegone condition of the American farmer."[51]

The Farm, Stock and Home, published in Minnesota, joined the assault on the Commission when it described it as "futile,"[52] and "not profound."[53] Its editor maintained that the investigators did no more than "skim the surface, making

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[49]Nebraska Farmer, LXVI (November 18, 1908), 952.

[50]Maine Farmer, quoted in Literary Digest, XXXVII (December 26, 1908), 965.

[51]Farm and Fireside (Springfield, Ohio), quoted in Literary Digest, XXXVII (December 26, 1908), 965.

[52]Farm, Stock and Home, XXIV (November 15, 1908), 568.

[53]Ibid., XXV (March 1, 1909), 145.

no effort to find the cause of the present conditions of farm life." To this Minnesota rural spokesman, it was "like putting a bunch of hens at work to move a large hill."[54]

Farm journal comment upon Roosevelt's Country Life Commission was varied and colorful. The great majority, however, favored the President's attempt to find the real causes of country life problems. This same division of sentiment applied to urban writers.

One city spokesman sarcastically quipped that since Roosevelt was going to Africa "any farmer whose barn roof leaks, or whose daughter finds compound fractions too hard . . . ought to write to Washington at once. The time is short."[55] A cartoonist depicted the Commission wearing Prince Albert coats milking cows in the country.[56] In spite of these occasional city barbs, the idea of an expert investigation of an ailing American institution captured the imaginations of urban reformers and progressives. To them the Country Life Commission was the essence of progressivism. In an era of criticism and change, the examination of an entire segment of the population was indeed appealing. From these reform-minded citizens came words of support and pages of advice.

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[54] Ibid., (January 15, 1909), 49.

[55] Quoted in Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission," 164.

[56] Henry Wallace, Uncle Henry's Own Story (3 vols., Des Moines, Iowa: Des Moines Publishers, 1917-1919), III, 103.

The Twelfth Annual Playground Congress of America meeting in New York City complimented the President for his insights into rural questions and hinted that the real difficulty with farm life was the "lack of recreation and pleasure."[57] The National Education Association approved the work of the study group and urged "the union of all forces which are working for the betterment of the country school and country life."[58] Both the New York Tuberculosis Society and the Maryland Medical Association "heartily join [ed] the movement for the betterment of the sanitary and social condition of the farmers."[59]

Such diverse groups as the New York Merchants Association and the Immigrant Association of Missouri lent their full support to the President's Commission.[60] As one might expect, Arthur Jackson, President of the National Good Roads Association, maintained that "the unsatisfactory condition of the farmer is owing more to bad roads than to all other causes combined."[61]

Many well-intentioned individuals advanced their own

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[57]Luther Gulick to Pinchot, August 11, 1908, Pinchot Papers.

[58]National Education Association Statement, February 22, 1909, ibid.

[59]H. M. Simmons to Roosevelt, August 18, 1908; E. G. Routzahn to Pinchot, October 21, 1908, ibid.

[60]Edward Hatch to Pinchot, November 18, 1908; John Curran to Roosevelt, August 24, 1908, ibid.

[61]Arthur Jackson to Roosevelt, August 12, 1908, ibid.

plans for the salvation of the American farmer. An irrate Colorado consumer weary of paying high food prices contended that "the only remedy I can see is to erect . . . warehouses and stockyards for the farmer, let him sell direct to the consumer and not to the speculator who fleeces in the fall the farmer and the balance of the year the whole population"[62] These government owned facilities would "keep our public money in circulation instead of flooding it all into one or a few men's pockets."[63]

A New York City resident proposed one of the more interesting plans of action. This farm friend suggested that the country be divided into agricultural zones to be administered by "farm engineers." The zone would be of such size as to permit the farm engineer to visit each farm at least once a month. The engineer would "not be an inspector but a friend and adviser" who would be available at all times for consultation. The plan called for the appointment of these engineers by the President with the state and federal government sharing the salary. According to its author, this scheme was "the key which will unlock the chain which now binds the farmer a helpless slave to the dreary tasks in which he works unhappily, without hope."[64]

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[62]Frederick Herman to Roosevelt, September 20, 1908, ibid.

[63]Ibid.

[64]Frank Carpenter to Roosevelt, 1908, ibid.

As the Commission traveled from city to city in its quest for information on rural life, the urban newspapers gave the Commission both publicity and sympathetic understanding. While in Denver, the Roosevelt study group received a full page spread in The Denver Post. The paper included not only the usual press releases explaining the goals and work of the Commission but also special stories by staff writers. In exploring the drabness of farm life for the wife, one writer's story concerned "Why Insane Asylums Contain So Many Females."[65] The editorial page of The Denver Post, however, was too concerned with the problems of city government to comment upon the Denver visit of "Roosevelt's Wise Men."[66] It was obvious that subscribers to this Denver daily paper knew about the work of the Roosevelt Commission.

In similar manner, the Deseret Evening News publicized the visit of the Country Life Commission to Salt Lake City. While the front page carried headline news about the work of the Commission, the editorial section gave its support to the task of the group. Its editor believed that the President's calling together of a body of experts to study country conditions would have rewarding results. The problem, he declared, "converges finally to one point--the need of a better education and of a higher appreciation of the beauty and value of farm life."[67]

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[65]The Denver Post, December 7, 1908.

[66]Ibid., December 6, 1908.

[67]Deseret Evening News, December 3, December 5, 1908.

Although the Morning World-Herald of Omaha greeted the Country Life Commission with front page headlines and "the glad hand of welcome,"[68] its editorial column raised doubts as to the value of the Commission for Nebraska farmers.[69] The Omaha paper asserted:

> . . . we can't help thinking that, if the Nebraska farmer stands in need of a federal commission to help make their lives tolerable, what a lot of commissions ought to be instituted to help those millions of unfortunates who are not Nebraska farmers.
>
> No disrespect is meant to the honorable commission or to Mr. Roosevelt's intentions. But we had been under the impression that the Nebraska farmer was about the last man on earth in need of the paternal care of the federal government.[70]

At the same time, however, the Omaha editor admitted that the findings of the Commission would lead to the solution of problems in less fortunate areas than Nebraska.[71]

Roosevelt's Country Life Commission began, carried out, and concluded its task with the general support of the American public. Although some urban and farm papers expressed reservations about the work of the Commission, the great majority of city and farm writers and spokesmen lauded the creation of the Commission and the President's concern for rural problems. Most Americans agreed with Mr. Dooley

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[68] Morning World-Herald (Omaha), December 10, 1908.

[69] Ibid., December 11, 1908.

[70] Ibid., December 10, 1908.

[71] Ibid.

when in his usual style he commented: ". . . farmers' wives are not happy, an' Tiddy Rosenfeldt proposes to see about it. Th' idee iv annybody bein' onhappy makes him feel bad. He would like to see th' whole wurruld inj'yin' itself."[72]

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[72]F. P. Dunne, "Mr. Dooley on Uplifting the Farmers," American Magazine, LXVII (November, 1908), 96.

CHAPTER VII

THE COUNTRY LIFE COMMISSION: THE REPORT

As Americans bid farewell to 1908 and welcomed the new year, the members of Roosevelt's Country Life Commission hurried to complete the tabulation of data that it had gathered during its two month investigation. The analysis of information and the writing of the report occupied the group's attention during January and the first week of February. Although the several members of the Commission contributed to the makeup of the report, Bailey served as its chief author.[1]

By the middle of January, Bailey had completed the preliminary draft, and the Commission, with the exceptions of Pinchot who was in Mexico and Page who was ill, met with the President to discuss the details of the report. According to Bailey, Roosevelt was pleased with the work "as it may be indicated by this remark; 'By George, this is a crackerjack, and it makes me happy as Punch.'"[2] With the President's

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[1]Liberty H. Bailey to Pinchot, January 29, 1909, Pinchot Papers.

[2]Bailey to Pinchot, January 29, 1909, ibid.

approval, Bailey returned to Cornell to prepare the final draft of the Commission's report so that Roosevelt might have it within a week.[3]

Both Pinchot and Page, however, expressed dissatisfaction with Bailey's handling of the report. Bailey believed that it should be the beginning of a national campaign for the betterment of rural living and wrote the report with this end in view. Explaining this position, Bailey argued:

> Merely to state what is the condition of schools and roads and to commend parcels post and other things of this kind would put absolutely nothing new before the people of the country . . . . The only thing that the Commission has done that is in any way new or original is to try to tie these things all together into some kind of a plan or scheme to the people indicating that there should be a campaign, we miss the purpose of our best end.[4]

Pinchot and Page maintained, however, that the report should merely state the problem with appropriate recommendations. Page indicated his discontent with Bailey's work when he wrote Pinchot that "I know exactly how you feel, for I was completely knocked out by Bailey's persistent 'wind' and the inability of the brethern to stand pat . . . . Simply for the sake of not seeming pigheaded, I authorized my name to go on it."[5] Apparently reasoning that opposition to Bailey's

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[3]There were eight drafts, all of which are in the Bailey Manuscript collection at Cornell University.

[4]Bailey to Pinchot, January 29, 1909, Pinchot Papers.

[5]Walter H. Page to Pinchot, January 29, 1909. See also, Bailey to Pinchot, February 18, 1909; Pinchot to Bailey, February 8, 1909, ibid.

notion would be fruitless, Pinchot also gave the report his approval.

Thus, on February 9, 1909, Roosevelt sent the Report of the Country Life Commission to Congress. In his special message that accompanied the Report, the President emphasized that although agriculture was generally prosperous, "farming does not yield either the profit or the satisfaction that it ought to yield . . . . There is discontent in the country, and in places discouragement."[6] Roosevelt urged Congress to investigate and concern itself with farm problems such as monopoly, sanitation, education, and effective cooperation.

In an attempt to focus Congressional attention on country life, the President concluded his special message with a classic statement of "agricultural fundamentalism":

> I warn my countrymen that the great recent progress made in city life is not a full measure of our civilization; for our civilization rests at bottom on the wholesomeness, the attractiveness and the completeness, as well as the prosperity, of life in the country. The men and women on the farms stand for what is fundamentally best and most needed in our American life. Upon the development of country life rests ultimately our ability . . . to continue to feed and clothe the hungry nations; to supply the city with fresh blood, clean bodies, and clear brains that can endure terrific strains of modern life; we need the development of men in the open country, who will be in the future, as in the past, the stay and strength of the nation in time of war, and its guiding and controlling spirit in time of peace.[7]

With this pronouncement of Presidential support, the study of

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[6]Report of the Country Life Commission, 5.

[7]Ibid., 9.

country life made by Roosevelt's Commission was placed in the hands of the nation's legislators.

In its investigation of rural problems, the Commission pointed to six glaring deficiencies in American farm life. The first problem concerned what the Commission called the "disregard of the inherent rights of landed workers."[8] According to the Report, four "interests" infringed upon the rights of farmers: land, stream, forest, and trade monopolists. The commissioners condemned the holding of land for speculative purposes, maintained that it "tends to develop a system of tenantry and absentee farming."[9] In similar tone, the Commission attacked "waterlordism" contending that the "streams belong to the people" and their protection "from monopoly is one of the first responsibilities of government."[10] The Report stated that "the forest as well as the stream should be saved from monopolistic control," and vigorously urged a government policy of forest protection to halt soil erosion and flooding.[11]

The most serious complaint against the "interests," however, heard "in all parts of the country and by all classes of farmers" was the "injustice, unequality, and discrimination on the part of transportation companies and middlemen."[12]

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[8] Ibid., 29.

[9] Ibid., 30.

[10] Ibid., 31.

[11] Ibid., 34.

[12] Ibid., 35.

The Commission observed that the business of farming was "greatly repressed by lack of mutual understanding and good faith in the transportation and marketing of agricultural produce."[13]

The Commission believed that the remedy for this problem was government action. "If the farmer suffers because his business is small, isolated, and unsyndicated," declared the Report, "then it is the part of government to see that he has a natural opportunity among his fellows and a square deal."[14] The Commission recommended "searching investigations" and "careful study" into the land, forest and stream control, and a "simplification or codification" of transportation rates.[15] This action, the Commission contended, would "help safeguard the separate and individual rights of the farmer, in the interest of the public good."[16]

The need for good roads was the second problem of country life, and "one of the most frequently mentioned in the hearings."[17] The economic development of the country depended upon the construction of adequate roads. Equally important, maintained the Report, roads were essential "for the elevation of the social and intellectual status of the

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[13] Ibid., 35-36.

[14] Ibid., 36.

[15] Ibid., 30, 34, 35, 37.

[16] Ibid., 37.

[17] Ibid., 38.

open country."[18] The Commission held that this was a national problem and called for a national plan whereby the federal government would establish a highway engineering service to be at the call of the state in working out effective and economical highway systems.[19]

A third factor that contributed to the deficiency of rural life was soil depletion. The Commission explained that conditions in any agricultural community is closely related to the available fertility of the soil."[20] The Report stated that soil depletion "has led to the saddest results"--farm tenancy.[21] The Commission pointed to the economic evils of tenancy in the South and condemned the rigid social stratification which tenancy created. "In some regions [the condition] is desperate and . . . demands vigorous treatment."[22]

The solution of the soil depletion question and its allied problem of tenancy, thought the commissioners, rested with the continued work of "the public institutions that are devoted to the new agriculture."[23] The Report stressed the need for crop diversification and rotation, emphasizing that "we must not close our eyes to the fact that our soil

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[18] Ibid., 38.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 39.

[22] Ibid., 40.

[23] Ibid., 41.

resources are still being lost through poor farming."[24]

The fourth defect in American agriculture concerned farm labor. The Commission lamented that because of seasonal employment and low wages "the drift of workers is from the open country to the town." The problem was so great in some areas that "the farmers are driven to dispose of their farms."[25]

In its analysis of the labor question, the Commission found three possible solutions. First and most important, it held that the "only real solution . . . must be in improved methods of farming."[26] Improved farming would decrease excessive hours of labor making farm work more appealing. "The best farmers," noted the Commission, "usually complain least about the labor difficulty."[27] Secondly, because the "barrenness of farm life" drove many hired men to liquor, the Commission reported that "drunkenness is a very serious menace to country life."[28] Because it complicated the labor problem the Commission demanded that the saloon "must be banished from at least all country districts . . . if our agricultural interests are to develop."[29]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., 42-43.

[26] Ibid., 43.

[27] Ibid., 44.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 44-45.

Besides the abolition of demon rum from the farm, the Commission recommended the establishment of "resident labor," as a third solution to the problem. In a somewhat unrealistic recommendation, the Report maintained that "some kind of school . . . must be provided for the farm laborer to . . . interest him intellectually in his work."[30] If the farm worker were intellectually interested in his labor, he would be more likely to settle in a rural community. This would create a resident labor force.

In its assessment of farm life, the Commission found sanitation to be a fifth defect. Roosevelt's investigators deplored the fact that "numberless . . . farm houses, especially of the tenant class, and even numerous rural school houses . . . do not have the rudiments of sanitary arrangements."[31] The Commission noted the prevalence of milk and water pollution and the universality of quack and patent medicine. Its Report called for immediate action to improve public health supervision in the rural areas of the nation, and recommended that the federal government be given the authority to send its health officials into the various states upon the request of the state government.[32]

The last problem of rural life concerned the role of the farm woman. The Commission made a special effort to

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[30] Ibid., 45.

[31] Ibid., 45.

[32] Ibid., 46.

ascertain the condition of the woman "because the success of country life depends in a very large degree on the woman's part."[33] The investigation showed that the burdens of poverty, isolation, and lack of labor saving devices "falls more heavily on the farmer's wife than on the farmer himself."[34]

Relief of this situation, thought the Commission, "must come through a general elevation of country living." Although better roads, telephones, mechanical devices, and running water, would help achieve this end, the Report stated that the long range answer was the school. "The school is capable of changing the whole attitude of the home life and the part that women should play in the development of the best country living."[35]

In its assessment of rural living conditions, the Country Life Commission maintained that these six questions--agrarian rights, roads, soil depletion, farm labor, health and the condition of the farm woman--were at the center of the country life problem. Just as these were at the heart of the problem, "a campaign for rural progress" was at the heart of the solution. The Bailey inspired and written Report vigorously proclaimed that "we must begin a campaign for rural progress."[36]

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[33] Ibid., 46.

[34] Ibid., 47.

[35] Ibid., 47-48.

[36] Ibid., 48.

The last part of the Commission's Report was largely a call to arms for a rural betterment campaign. It urged that "all agencies that are capable of furthering a better country life must be federated."[37] In tones reminiscent of the Populists, the Commission said that "the situation calls for concerted action. It must be aroused and energized." Unlike the agrarian rebels, however, the President's Commission maintained that "the remedies are of many kinds, and they must come slowly."[38]

The Commission's plan for the improvement of country life called for a continued rural investigation, a redirected educational system, the development of agricultural cooperation, and the stimulation of agrarian leadership and ideals.

Realizing that its own study was superficial, the Commission stressed the need for a thorough inventory of the nation's agricultural resources. "We must now know," urged the Report, "what are the capabilities of every agricultural locality."[39] The inventory would include detailed accounts of soil conditions, climates, farm methods, market conditions, highways, economic factors, labor conditions, and the "natural attractions and disadvantages of each locality." The Commission believed that a survey of this type was essential to

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[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid., 50.

[39] Ibid., 52.

"build a scientifically and economically sound country life."[40]

The need for a redirected education was of paramount importance in the proposed campaign for the betterment of rural living. "In every part of the United States," stated the Report, "there seems to be one mind, . . . on the necessity of redirecting the rural schools. There is no such unanimity on any other subject . . . . It is recognized that all difficulties resolve themselves . . . into a question of education."[41]

Both the farm population and the Commission held the school responsible for ineffective farming, lack of agrarian idealism, social drabness, and the urbanward drift of farmers. According to the Commission, the rural school should teach practical courses in homemaking and agricultural science, and become more of a social center.

Concerning education, the Commission made two significant recommendations. First, it encouraged the federal government to cooperate with the states in developing a system of agricultural vocational education.[42] Secondly, it suggested the creation of nation-wide extension work, averring that "it is to the extension departments of the colleges . . . that we must now look for the most effective rousing of the people of the land."[43]

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[40] Ibid., 52-53.

[41] Ibid., 53.

[42] Ibid., 55.

[43] Ibid., 56.

Coupled with the concern for a redirected education was the urgent appeal for revitalizing cooperation among farmers. The Commission held that farmers "must learn to work together naturally for the purpose of forwarding themselves and to establish an effective community spirit."[44] The Report praised the work of the Grange and Farmers' Union but believed that "the general farmer is yet insufficiently helped by these societies."[45]

Roosevelt's Commission made an important recommendation when it called for state and federal legislation to "stimulate and facilitate the organization of such cooperative associations" and to provide the cooperatives "with every legal facility for the transaction of business."[46] The group also called for increased farm credit facilities with "research into the farm loan situation," and the establishment of postal savings banks.[47]

The Commission maintained that the entire scheme for the betterment of country life "resolves itself at the end into a question of personality. Society or government can not do much for country life unless there is a voluntary response in the personal ideals of those who live in the country."[48]

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[44] Ibid., 56.

[45] Ibid., 57.

[46] Ibid., 58.

[47] Ibid., 59.

[48] Ibid., 63.

The Country Life Commission urged a revival of agrarian idealism and a revitalization of farm concern for its own problems. In this matter, the Commission called on the church to take "a larger leadership" in the country life movement.[49]

With the call for a revived agrarian idealism, the Report of Roosevelt's Commission came to an end. In evaluating the work of the Country Life Commission, one must ask several questions: Was the Report a valid assessment of conditions in rural America? What was the nature of the Commissions recommendations? To what extent was the Commission and its Report influential in bringing about suggested reforms and in turning American attention to the question of rural life?

As the Commission itself admitted, the Report was a superficial survey of rural life. The Commission investigated farm life through the eyes of the farmer himself through questionnaires and hearings, which were held not in rural communities but in urban centers such as Boston, Salt Lake City, Dallas, Los Angeles or Omaha. The Commission itself actually knew little about agriculture from first hand observations. Of the three editors on the Commission, Page, Beard, and Wallace, only "Uncle Henry" concerned himself with agricultural conditions through personal contact with farmers --prosperous Iowans at that. Butterfield and Bailey were associated with agricultural affairs in an intellectual sense.

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[49]Ibid., 61-62.

Bailey had, of course, observed farm conditions in agriculturally-depressed New York, but this certainly did not give him a comprehensive picture of American rural living conditions. Pinchot's interest in agriculture was mainly academic, while Barrett's activity in farming was restricted to the more economically depressed rural areas of the South.

It is difficult to believe that in an age of growing agricultural prosperity, farm life was as woefully inadequate as pictured by the Commission. One wonders whether an urban group called upon by a President to investigate country life did not deem it an obligation to arrive at generally negative conclusions. At the same time, hoping that the federal government might take immediate action to remedy specific problems, perhaps those farmers who appeared before the Commission tended to overstate the drabness, hardship, and difficulties of rural life. In similar manner, a group of urban-minded investigators might be tempted to evaluate rural life in terms of their own city economic and social environment. Would not Walter Hines Page have found the newest model outhouse, equipped with the latest Sears catalog, an unsanitary condition?

Certainly the conclusions of the Commissioners characterized the condition of American agriculture accurately for specific rural areas. One must, however, be careful in transferring these more localized problems to the country as a whole. Conditions in the declining East and among Southern

tenant farmers were quite different from those which existed in Iowa, Nebraska, or Minnesota.

The nature of the Commission's statement and recommendations was essentially a conservative rehash of chronic farm complaints--more stringent monopoly control, better roads, labor shortages, and the isolation and drabness of farm life. Although the Commission used such terms as "urgent need" and "immediate action" quite freely, its recommendations were usually couched in less forceful wording. The Commissioners called for "careful studies" into monopoly problems. Instead of urging federal financial aid for roads--as many were doing--the Commission favored federal engineering services for the states in working out effective road systems. The demands for vocational education and extension services called for "federal cooperation," but did not specifically call for financial support.

Unlike Populist cries of the past or Non-partisan League agitation of the future, the Country Life Commission did not demand immediate state or federal solutions for existing problems. The group's conservatism is perhaps best summed up in the belief that "the remedies are of many kinds, and they must come slowly."[50]

It is difficult to assess the influence of the Commission's findings on the legislation which was eventually passed to remedy certain shortcomings. Although Congress

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[50] Ibid., 50.

refused to appropriate funds to print and circulate the Report for public use, it did provide for its publication as a Senate document. Professor Ellsworth theorizes that Secretary Wilson joined forces with Congress in opposition to the work of the Commission. In January of 1909, however, Wilson wrote Bailey: "You have made a deep impression on the country--deeper than could have been made by an equal number of officials from any of the Departments . . . you have done a great service to the country . . . . The incoming administration could very wisely continue a Country Life Commission."[51] Although Congress established both parcel post and postal savings banks during the Taft administration, Taft ignored the work of the Commission and remained disinterested in rural questions.

It was during the Woodrow Wilson years that many of the Commission's recommendations found expression in Congressional action. The biographer of Hoke Smith lists the Report of the Country Life Commission as one of the factors responsible for the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 and the Smith-Hughes Act of three years later.[52] The Smith-Lever, or Agricultural Extension, Act provided federal funds for agricultural extension work through the land grant colleges, while the Smith-Hughes Act established agricultural education in the secondary

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[51]January 22, 1909, Papers of the Secretary.

[52]Dewey W. Grantham, Jr., Hoke Smith and the Politics of the New South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 236.

schools with federal financial assistance.

The Woodrow Wilson years also witnessed the enactment of the Clayton Act which exempted farm associations from anti-trust laws and the Warehouse Act which established a system of national licensing and the issuance of warehouse receipts to be used as collateral for farm loans. Certainly the Federal Aid Road Bill of 1916 was a boon to agricultural interests.

Arthur Link credits the Country Life Commission with influencing Secretary David Houston's broader approach to farm questions. He was instrumental in establishing the Co-operative Extension Service as well as offices of information and marketing in the Department of Agriculture.[53]

Although it is difficult to determine the influence of the Country Life Commission on the passage of subsequent farm legislation, the impact of the Commission on the American mind is more easily documented. A study of the popular magazines of the period indicates that the Commission's investigations did turn American attention toward rural life questions. After the appearance of the Report, magazines such as The Independent, The Outlook, World's Work, Review of Reviews, Everybody's and American Magazine began to editorialize about farm issues and carry feature articles on farming and rural life. Between 1909 and 1914 popular magazines pub-

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[53]Arthur Link, Wilson, The New Freedom (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1956), 136.

lished over 200 editorials and special stories on agricultural problems and country life.[54] World's Work, The North American, The Independent, and The Outlook carried a series of editorials during the fall of 1908 and the spring of 1909 explaining and describing the findings of the Commission.[55] The Independent asserted that the Commission has "given us an admirable treatise which should be widely circulated. Too much attention cannot be given to our productive forces."[56]

A series of articles that appeared in The Outlook in 1909 was typical of the new magazine interest in farm life and rural problems. Under a general heading, "The Life of the Farmer," several stories told the urban reader about agricultural education, the roles of women and children on the farm, the economic problems of farming, and other first hand reports.[57] Of the rural questions that the magazines discussed, the life of the farm wife seemed to be the most popular. Women's magazines as well as the general news magazines began to probe into the problems that confronted rural women--usually raising far more questions than answers. Woman's Home Companion delved into "Step Savers on the

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[54]This is based upon a survey of magazine articles listed in Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature.

[55]See The Outlook, XC (October 17, 1908), 340-341, (November 21, 1908), 609-611, and XCI (February 20, 1909), 365-366; World's Work, XVII (March, 1909), 11380-4.

[56]The Independent, LXVII (August 12, 1909), 374-376.

[57]The Outlook, XCI (April 10, 1909), 823-835.

Farm,"[58] while Ladies Home Journal investigated "What the Farmer Can Do to Lighten his Wife's Work."[59]

Typical of this approach was an article, "Teaching the Farm Women to Live," which appeared in The Outlook. The author lamented the fact that "of the four million American women on our farms, a few actually live. Too many of them exist like the horse in the barn or the cow in the pasture, pieces of humanomechanism in which the body works and the mind is idle."[60] Although the writer of this article realized that the "creation of true homemaking is of vital importance to all the country,"[61] author Willey offered little in the way of advice that would solve the problem.

The publicity given to rural conditions and questions by Roosevelt's Commission on Country Life was its most important contribution. Although it was a superficial survey, it turned the attention of both public and private interests toward rural life. Like so many other Roosevelt actions, the Country Life Commission captured the public imagination. This was the Progressive Era; critical evaluations of American institutions were the order of the day, and American agriculture was no exception.

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[58] Woman's Home Companion, XXXIX (October, 1912), 101.

[59] Ladies Home Journal, XXVIII (February 15, 1911), 28.

[60] Day Willey, "Teaching the Farm Woman to Live," The Outlook, XCI (April 10, 1909), 833.

[61] Ibid., 835.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: REORGANIZATION AND WILSON'S "SCIENTIFIC CORPS"

When James Wilson became Secretary of Agriculture in 1897, he inherited a young fledgling department trying to learn what its function was. The secretaryship of his predecessor, J. Sterling Morton, had witnessed little growth.[1] The Panic of 1893 and the depression that followed adversely affected not only the American farmer, but also the Department of Agriculture. Secretary Morton, a conservative Cleveland Democrat, cut departmental expenditures, spending less in 1895 than in 1891.[2] Although Morton recognized the importance of scientific investigation, the Department expanded its activities very little during the Cleveland years.[3]

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[1]For the standard biography of Morton, see James C. Olson, J. Sterling Morton (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1942).

[2]Gladys Baker, Wayne Rasmussen, Vivian Wiser, and Jane M. Porter, Century of Service, the First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 33-36.

[3]Two new areas of significant investigation begun under Morton were nutrition and road work.

In contrast to the Morton years, the Wilson period paralelled one of the great periods of agrarian well being. Just as economic plight and political conservatism curtailed the growth of the Morton department, prosperity coupled with Wilson's leadership brought the Department into the greatest period of farm production research in the history of the world. Departmental research emphasized investigation that would lead to more efficient farming and production increases.

Wilson's urgent concern over increasing American farm production stemmed from three factors. First of all, renewed Malthusian writings and forecasts stimulated by great population gains during the last half of the nineteenth century worried the Secretary. American population grew from 31,443,000 in 1860 to 92,000,000 in 1900, while the population of Europe increased from 293,000,000 in 1870 to over 490,000,000 by 1914. Wilson revealed this concern when he wrote in 1908 that, "although today American farmers sell 1200 million dollars worth of surpluses abroad, eventually the production of the farm will be consumed at home."[4]

Secondly, the demographic trend in the United States indicated the relative decline of farm numbers. To Wilson, this meant that the farmer would have to produce more in the future to feed urban dwellers. Even with the application of scientific principles to farming, Wilson doubted that the

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[4]Wilson to F. H. LaBaume, June 11, 1908, Papers of the Secretary.

American farmer could continue to supply adequate food stuffs if the rural population continued to dwindle in the total American population.[5]

In the third place, Wilson wanted to see the farmer receive just compensation for his labors. More efficient farming and increased production would bring greater profits into individual rural pockets.[6]

To achieve these goals of increased scientific investigation and greater farm production, Wilson had to convince Congress that augmented appropriations for his Department would be an investment in the nation's future. The Secretary who had previously served in Congress on the Agriculture Committee formed an extremely fine working relationship with the nation's legislators. The correspondence of the Secretary indicates that he was a masterful politician in his dealings with Congress.[7] In 1901 he wrote to his old friend Henry Wallace that "our work is increasing very fast and Congress seems to be ready to give us whatever we ask; in fact, in some cases when the committees are sitting they telephone down to know if we can use more money."[8] Two years later Wilson

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[5]Wilson to Elbert F. Baldwin, January 25, 1911, ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Wilson to James Wordsworth, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, House of Representatives, April 7, 1902; to Robert Wallace, May 2, 1904; to D. E. Salmon, December 16, 1902; to Charles Scott, Chairman, Committee on Agriculture, March 17, May 20, 1908, ibid.

[8]Wilson to Henry Wallace, December 16, 1901, ibid.

observed that "Congress has been very liberal with the farmer since I came here;"[9] while near the end of the Roosevelt years he confided that "we are getting money really about as fast as we can prepare men to use it . . . . The Department of Agriculture has been developed by the friendliness of the Senate."[10]

The statistics indicate that Wilson's "friendliness with the Senate" resulted in greatly increased appropriations. When he entered office in 1897 the Department's annual budget was less than $4,000,000 with under 2,500 employees. By 1912 the appropriation had jumped to almost $21,000,000 with over 14,000 people in the Department.

During the Roosevelt years the Department of Agriculture budget increased five times. In the same period, that of the Navy Department did not quite double,[11] while the budget of the War Department dropped from $166,000,000 to $161,000,000.[12] During the same years the Justice Department's

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[9]Wilson to D. B. Henderson, February 5, 1903, ibid.

[10]Wilson to Henry Wallace, April 9, 1908, ibid.

[11]"Report of the Secretary of Navy," Annual Reports of the Navy Department, 1909; (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909), 57; ibid, 1901 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 22. Naval appropriations increased from $78 to $137 million.

[12]"Report of the Secretary of War," War Department Annual Reports, 1909 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909), 154; Annual Reports of the War Department (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 313.

appropriation grew very little.[13] Renewed prosperity coupled with Wilson's astute handling of Congress was responsible for the Department's extraordinary growth in appropriations.

Wilson recognized the need to establish an efficient department administered by professional agriculturalists. Prior to Wilson's appointment little thought had been given to the formation of plans for an organized and orderly development of the Department. Each new aspect of agricultural investigation had merely been established as an autonomous division. In 1897, Wilson found a Department comprised of two bureaus, thirteen divisions, two offices, two sections, and the library.[14] Because this proved to be an inefficient operation, in 1901, with Congressional approval, Wilson reorganized the Department.

The major change came with the creation of the Bureau of Plant Industry which consolidated the Divisions of Botany, Vegetable Physiology and Pathology, Pomology, and Agristology. The Section of Seed and Plant Introduction and the experimental gardens and grounds were also placed in the new bureau. At the same time the Divisions of Chemistry, Soils, and Forestry were made bureaus.[15] Later in 1905 the Divisions

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[13]Annual Report of the Attorney-General of the United States, 1909 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909), 74.

[14]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture." Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1898, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1898).

[15]U.S., Statutes At Large, XXXII, Part I, 303.

of Biological Survey and Entomology were promoted to bureau status.

Wilson reorganized the Department in the hope that centralization would develop more efficient operation. The Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry under the new plan coordinated all plant research which before had been carried out in several divisions.

Secretary Wilson also sought to extend and strengthen his own authority and control of the Department which, by default, had previously been exercised by bureau and divisional heads. Within two weeks after assuming office, he issued instructions that all departmental statements for public release had to have the authorization of the bureau or division chief and the personal approval of the Secretary.[16] The "Wilson gag" of 1897 remained as departmental policy throughout his Secretaryship. In 1900, Wilson concentrated all hiring of personnel--even charwomen--in his office.[17] Later in his administration, he announced that he would remove without a hearing any inefficient or incapable employees.[18]

Even though Wilson tightened his control, it was inevitable that in such a fast growing Department corruption

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[16]Wilson, General Order Number 2, March 20, 1897, Order Book, 1897-1911, Papers of the Secretary.

[17]Wilson, General Order Number 33, October 16, 1900, ibid.

[18]Wilson, General Order Number 89, October 19, 1905, ibid.

would rear its ugly head. Such was the case in 1905 when the "cotton leak" scandal broke in Washington. As early as 1902 rumors of "leaks" in the cotton reports had reached President Roosevelt's desk. Wilson, who seemed to have an unbelievable trust in everyone, dismissed the rumors as "misrepresentations of facts."[19] A year later Roosevelt again notified Wilson that "for over a year I have heard grumblings about these leakings and complaints that Government reports were used to help the stock broker."[20] The Secretary labeled the complaints as "absolutely false."[21]

With continued charges of "cotton leaks" to New York cotton brokers, Secretary Wilson called upon the Secret Service to investigate the matter.[22] When the findings of the Service indicated that the assistant statistician, Edwin S. Holmes, was "leaking" confidential cotton information to New York, Wilson at once dismissed both Holmes and his Chief, John Price.[23]

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[19]Wilson to Roosevelt, December 13, 1902, Papers of the Secretary.

[20]Roosevelt to Wilson, December 11, 1903, Roosevelt Papers.

[21]Wilson to Roosevelt, December 14, 1903, Papers of the Secretary.

[22]Wilson to Roosevelt, July 17, 1905; to Henry Wallace, August 3, 1905, ibid.

[23]Wilson to Roosevelt, July 12, 1905, Papers of the Secretary. See also, Attorney-General William Moody to Roosevelt, July 21, 1905; Roosevelt to Moody, July 12, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

The graft uncovered in the Department prompted some eastern editors to call for Wilson's resignation. Farm journals were not as concerned as their urban counterparts. The Prairie Farmer reminded its readers of Wilson's great work in the department and urged that the guilty party "if there be one" be punished.[24] The Twentieth Century Farmer praised Wilson for "honesty of purpose" and called the investigation into the cotton leak problem "a healthful influence in purifying the atmosphere."[25]

Roosevelt took the whole affair calmly. From Oyster Bay he wrote Wilson that "it is the hot season and the dull season, and fools that are having hysterics over you need but little attention from us."[26] No one seemed surprised that the President gave his full support to his Secretary.

Wilson took immediate steps to remedy the situation when he turned the Bureau of Statistics over to Assistant Secretary Hayes giving him "a free hand to get rid of everybody that did not shape up, and . . . to report any suggestions that might occur to him with regard to a reorganization of the Bureau."[27] Until a reorganization was effected,

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[24]Prairie Farmer quoted in Twentieth Century Farmer, June 21, 1905.

[25]Twentieth Century Farmer, September 20, 1905.

[26]Roosevelt to Wilson, July 14, 1905; July 13, 1905; Wilson to Roosevelt, July 21, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[27]Wilson to S. E. Payne, February 27, 1906, Papers of the Secretary.

Wilson removed the examination of crop reports from one man and placed it in the hands of a Crop Reporting Board. This Board remains as the main feature of the reorganized Bureau.[28]

The same year two highly respected scientists in the Department resigned during investigations into their activities. Dr. Daniel Salmon, who had headed the Bureau of Animal Industry since 1884, resigned when Wilson discovered that the Chief had an "improper and serious" connection with an unidentified firm.[29]

The other scientist to leave the Department under fire was George T. Moore. Secretary Wilson explained to Roosevelt that

> it appears that Dr. Moore, while a member of the scientific staff of this Department, entered into an agreement with an outside concern to sell a patent already controlled by the Government . . . he persistently deceived me, and his immediate superior officers . . . . Dr. Moore had violated, by his actions, the basic principles of ethics which should prevail in a scientific corp such as is in the Department.[30]

Both Salmon and Moore left the service of the Department without the attention which the press gave the cotton leak affair. It was no wonder that by the fall of 1905 Wilson was complain-

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[28]Wilson to Henry Wallace, August 3, 1905, ibid. "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Statistics," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1909 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1910), 661.

[29]Roosevelt to Wilson, September 8, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[30]Wilson to Roosevelt, October 10, 1905, Papers of the Secretary.

ing about stomach trouble.[31] However, other than the outbreak of 1905, Wilson experienced little difficulty with graft or corruption.

Reorganization and centralization of the Department were accompanied by Wilson's determination to establish an effective "scientific corps." The Secretary held that the manpower of his Department should consist of well-trained and capable scientists. Whereas J. Sterling Morton had been a journalist and publisher, Wilson had taught at an agricultural college and had worked closely with Iowa experiment stations. His professional background in scientific agriculture molded his attitude toward the selection of his coworkers.

Wilson's first Assistant Secretary, Joseph Brigham, had no scientific training in agriculture and apparently had been appointed by McKinley because he was Master of the National Grange.[32] Brigham's death in the summer of 1904 left Roosevelt with the task of appointing a new man, in an election year. After being deluged with farm groups supporting "favorite sons," Roosevelt admitted that he "had no conception that that position of Assistant Secretary of Agriculture was regarded as of such importance by farmers."[33] He

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[31]Wilson to Henry Wallace, August 3, 1905, ibid.

[32]Baker, et. al., Century of Service, 40.

[33]Roosevelt to T. C. Platt, August 2, 1904, Roosevelt Papers.

maintained that before he made the appointment he wanted "to consult with practical farmers,"[34] and confer with Secretary Wilson.[35]

Roosevelt seriously considered four men for the position: Aaron Jones, master of the National Grange from Indiana, Elliot Norris, New York Democrat and head of the state Grange, G. Howard Davidson, New York farm journalist, and Willet Hayes, Professor of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota. In the process of elimination, the President dismissed Jones and Norris on political grounds. Norris was a Democrat,[36] while Jones was "a good Republican but from Indiana."[37] Roosevelt did not appoint Davidson because of Grange opposition "on the ground that they did not really feel that he was one of their numbers."[38] Thus, in December of 1904 Roosevelt named Willet Hayes to assist Wilson in the Department of Agriculture.[39]

Wilson was very pleased with the selection of a professional man and observed that "I have no doubt that in the

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[34]Roosevelt to A. J. Beveridge, August 8, 1904, ibid.

[35]Roosevelt to J. W. Wadsworth, August 3, 1904; to C. J. Bell, August 1, 1904, ibid.

[36]Roosevelt to T. C. Platt, August 2, 1904, ibid.

[37]Roosevelt to B. B. Odell, August 1, 1904, ibid.

[38]Roosevelt to T. C. Platt, August 2, 1904; to Gifford Pinchot, July 16, 1904, ibid. Roosevelt offered the position to Pinchot, but the latter declined in favor of his forestry work.

[39]Wilson to B. L. French, December 13, 1904, Papers of the Secretary.

future secretaries and assistant secretaries are quite likely to come from the same source."[40] Hayes brought many years of experience to the Department. He had served as director of experiment station work in North Dakota and worked with Minnesota stations while he taught at the University of Minnesota. During his experiment station work in North Dakota he had developed several strains of wheat and was instrumental in the organization of the American Breeders Association in 1900.[41]

Assistant Secretary Hayes characterized the type of professional staff which Wilson sought for his "scientific corp." The men who headed Wilson's bureaus were all scholars with scientific training. Daniel Salmon, Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry until 1905, graduated from Cornell with a doctor's degree in veterinary science.[42] After working for the state of New York in a campaign to eradicate contagious pleuropneumonia, he joined the Department of Agriculture as a scientist in the Bureau of Animal Industry. Demonstrating a flair for administrative work, he was promoted to Chief of the Bureau in 1884.[43]

Salmon displayed a marked facility for selecting capable young scientists for his Bureau. Dr. Theobald Smith, a

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[40]Wilson to W. J. Beal, December 15, 1904, ibid.

[41]Baker, et. al., Century of Service, 41.

[42]John W. Leonard, ed., Who's Who In America, 1901-1902 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1901), 892.

[43]T. Swann Harding, Two Blades of Grass (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1947), 150.

Harvard graduate in medicine, took charge of the animal disease investigations in the Bureau and was instrumental in combating cattle-tick fever. F. L. Kilborne and Cooper Curtice, both veterinarians, worked closely with Smith in his cattle-tick investigations. A brilliant biochemist, Marion Dorset, pioneered in hog cholera investigation perfecting a preventive serum by 1907.[44] Charles W. Stiles, a graduate of Wesleyan University and College de France in Paris, became Bureau zoologist in the 1890's and widely known for his studies of the hookworm problem.[45]

Salmon left the Department in 1905 to organize a veterinary medicine department at the University of Montevideo in Uruguay. His successor, Alonzo Melvin, graduated from Chicago Veterinary College and had been associated with the Department since 1887.[46]

The newly formed Bureau of Plant Industry had as its Chief, Beverly T. Galloway, graduate of the University of Missouri. He joined the Department in 1887 as head of the Division of Vegetable Physiology and Pathology.[47] Galloway's

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[44] Ibid., 151-152.

[45] "Report of the Chief, Bureau of Animal Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1902 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902), 25-46.

[46] Albert N. Marquis, ed., Who's Who in America, 1908-1909 (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1908), 1281; "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1906, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1906), 123.

[47] Leonard, ed., Who's Who, 412.

own research was mainly on grapes and nursery crops and diseases. "He is most notable perhaps," writes T. Swann Harding, "for having assembled around him a galaxy of brilliant plant scientists."[48]

In Galloway's Bureau, as Harding correctly asserts, were found the great plant scientists of the day. Erwin F. Smith, the "father of plant pathology," was to the bacteriology of plant disease what Pasteur was to the early days of animal bacteriology. Merton B. Waite pioneered in the study of fruit blight and allied diseases,[49] while H. A. Allard discovered that aphids carried certain virus harmful to tobacco.[50] A lantern-jawed New Englander, William Orton, became internationally famous for his investigations of "wilt disease" of cotton.[51] These four scientists were representative of the caliber of men who labored with Galloway in Wilson's Bureau of Plant Industry.

Milton Whitney, head of the Bureau of Soils for thirty years, had attended Johns Hopkins and had been associated with experiment station work prior to his joining the Department in

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[48]Harding, Two Blades of Grass, 84.

[49]"Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1907, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1908), 265.

[50]Harding, Two Blades of Grass, 91.

[51]Wilt Disease of Cotton and Its Control, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 27, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902), 2.

1897.[52] Whitney realized the basic importance of soil physics and saw the need for studying soils in the field and making maps which would give farmers reliable guidance. Under Whitney, the work of soils was diverted from the chemists to soil specialists.[53] Whitney himself carried on extensive research on the uses of fertilizers to enrich soil.[54]

In his soil science work, Whitney found capable assistance in Hugh Bennett who entered the Bureau in 1903 and C. F. Marbut who directed soil-survey work after resigning his position at the University of Missouri. Bennett carried out several surveys of soils in the eroded sections of the East and was a popular speaker on soil care. One authority refers to Bennett as the "greatest soil evangelist of all time." Marbut systematized and coordinated the survey of soils and became a well known soil scientist.[55]

No one in Wilson's Department received more national attention than Harvey W. Wiley, head of the Bureau of Chemistry. Wiley came to the Department in 1883 as "the chemist,"

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[52]Leonard, ed., Who's Who, 1230.

[53]Milton Whitney and F. K. Cameron, The Chemistry of Soil as Related to Crop Production, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, Bulletin No. 22, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903).

[54]See Milton Whitney Fertilizers for Corn Soils, Fertilizers for Wheat Soils, Fertilizers for Potatoe Soils, United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, Bulletin Nos. 65, 66, 67 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909).

[55]Harding, Two Blades of Grass, 197.

after earning his Ph.D. from Harvard.[56] Although most Americans remembered Wiley for his campaign to promote federal pure food and drug legislation, he wrote many scholarly works including a three volume Principles and Practices of Agricultural Chemistry and over 200 scientific papers. His investigations in sugar beet culture were largely responsible for the birth of that American industry.[57]

Especially important to the cause of scientific investigation was the Office of Experiment Stations. Charged with both research and educational responsibilities, the Office was directed by the capable Alfred C. True. Like the other leaders in the Department, True was a trained scientist who earned his Ph.D. From Erskine College.[58] Under True the Office began nutrition, irrigation, and drainage studies.

The Bureau of Forestry was under the leadership of world famous forester Gifford Pinchot,[59] while Willis Moore headed the Weather Bureau. Moore had previously been Professor of Meteorology at Iowa.[60]

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[56]Harvey Wiley, "The Education of a Backwood's Hoosier," Indiana Magazine of History, XXIV (June, 1928), 82-88.

[57]Oscar E. Anderson, Jr., The Health of a Nation: Harvey W. Wiley and the Fight for Pure Food (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958), 96. Anderson's biography of Wiley discusses not only the campaign for pure food legislation but also his work in other scientific studies.

[58]Leonard, ed., Who's Who, 1153.

[59]Pinchot's career and qualifications are discussed above in Chapter III.

[60]"Report of the Chief of the Weather Bureau," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1908 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909), 189.

The Secretary's desire to establish a "scientific corps" capable of attacking all scientific agricultural problems gradually came into reality as the Department attracted and was able to hold men like Salmon, Galloway or Wiley. A group of brilliant young men gave solid support to the leaders of the Department in their conquest of animal and plant diseases, breeding of new specimens, studies of soils and fertilizers, and attempts to educate the farm population. One must agree with the editor of a Nebraska farm paper when he declared that "in the Department of Agriculture, the future of American farming is in good hands."[61]

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[61] Twentieth Century Farmer, July 6, 1906.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE: SCIENTIFIC AND EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In his Second Annual Message to Congress in 1902, Roosevelt aptly described the activity of the Department of Agriculture when he asserted:

> In no department of governmental work in recent years has there been greater success than in that of scientific aid given to the farming population, thereby showing them how most efficiently to help themselves. There is no need of insisting upon its importance, for the welfare of the farmer is fundamentally necessary to the welfare of the republic as a whole.[1]

All scientific investigation in the Wilson-directed Department of Agriculture was aimed at one thing--the promotion of efficient farming, which would result in greater production.

An analysis of the Department's budgets for the Roosevelt years supports the conclusion that scientific investigation grew very rapidly. Between 1901 and 1909 appropriations for soil studies jumped from $25,000 to $200,000, while pomological investigation funds increased from under $10,000 to over $150,000. The appropriations for the Bureau

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[1]"Second Annual Message," Works of TR, XV, 165.

of Plant Industry doubled between 1907 and 1909. From 1904 to 1909 Congress allotted almost a million dollars for scientific study to combat the boll weevil; almost as much was granted to fight the gypsy moth. Special funds were appropriated for silk culture, tea, and sugar beet investigations.[2] There seemed to be a growing awareness in Congress that scientific agricultural research was a national responsibility.

The scientific work of the Department of Agriculture involved many people and a growing number of specialized investigation areas. However, five fields of study affected the future of American farming the most: the search for and adaptation of foreign plants, the fight to eradicate animal and plant disease, the attempt to combat harmful insects, plant and animal breeding, and soil improvement.

The Wilson Secretaryship placed a great emphasis upon the adaptation of foreign plants to American soils and climates. With the movement of farming into the arid regions of the West, the Department recognized the need for plants that could grow and produce with a minimum of moisture. The Department also eagerly sought plant life that could help in the diversification of Southern agriculture. These two factors, coupled with a desire to place a more varied diet on urban tables, motivated the search for new foreign varieties.

In 1897 Congress appropriated $20,000 to aid in the

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[2]Appropriation statistics for the Department of Agriculture for the years from 1897 to 1912 were derived from the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture.

search for foreign plants for American farming.[3] Under the direction of David G. Fairchild, the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction sent "plant explorers" to every continent in search of new items.[4] Fairchild himself traveled throughout Asia, Europe, South America, Africa, and the East Indies. Many others joined the "exploration corp" in the quest for world plants. Niels Hansen went into Russia and China to find an alfalfa adaptable to the cold and arid Northwest,[5] while Mark A. Carleton made two expeditions into Russia and Turkey in search of rust and drouth resistant wheat.[6]

Seaman Knapp studied rice culture in Japan,[7] and Frank Meyer made four trips into the interior of China bringing

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[3]For a study of foreign plant introduction into the United States, see Nelson Klose, America's Crop Heritage, The History of Foreign Plant Introduction by the Federal Government, (Ames, Iowa: The Iowa State College Press, 1950).

[4]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1902 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902), xxxiii; see also, David G. Fairchild, The World Was My Garden, Travels of a Plant Explorer (New York: Scribners, 1928).

[5]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1900 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1900), xxxii; see also, H. J. Taylor, To Plant the Prairies and Plains: The Life and Work of Niels Ebbsen Hansen (Mt. Vernon, Iowa: Bios, 1941).

[6]"Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1902, 62.

[7]Ibid., 5, 6.

back over 2,000 varieties of plants.[8] The plants which were introduced to American soils during the Roosevelt years were largely the result of these explorers and their tireless searchings in foreign lands.[9]

To aid in the diversification of Southern agriculture, the Department tried two plant innovations. Seaman Knapp returned from Japan with a short-kernaled variety of rice with improved milling qualities. Japanese Kiushi rice proved to be easily adaptable to parts of the South, especially eastern Texas and Louisiana.[10] The Department found the new variety 25 per cent more productive than existing American strains. Between 1896 and 1911 American rice production increased over sixfold.[11]

From Europe, the Department attempted to establish the silk industry in the South. Earlier, in the 1880's, lack of Congressional interest had brought a similar effort to an abrupt end.[12] However, in 1903 Congress appropriated $10,000

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[8]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1908, 40.

[9]A summary of plant introductions during Wilson's tenure is found in "The Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1913), 117-121.

[10]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1900, xxxii; "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1902, 104.

[11]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 118; Wilson to William S. Harvey, January 13, 1906, Papers of the Secretary.

[12]L. O. Howard, "The United States Department of Agriculture and Silk Culture," Yearbook, 1903, 140.

to encourage departmental work in silk culture. Wilson sent an explorer to France to study its silk industry, and soon southern mulberry bushes were covered with cocoons. One problem remained--no one would buy the cocoons. For some time the Department of Agriculture created an artificial market by purchasing the cacoons, but L. O. Howard who directed the work in silk culture stated in late 1903 that the future of the American silk industry was "problematical."[13] Congress solved the problem when the 1904 appropriations included no funds for silk work.

Many of the plant introductions were for adaptation to the arid climates of the West. New forage crops for dry land agriculture included Hairy Peruvian Alfalfa which was the most productive variety in the irrigated lands of the Southwest[14] and Siberian crested wheat grass which adapted well to the colder arid northern plains.[15] Asian brome grass and berssem clover from Egypt were successfully introduced into some of the more arid Western lands.[16] In 1906 an

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[13]Ibid., 144; see also Wilson to George Washington Carver, April 19, 1902, Papers of the Secretary.

[14]Peruvian Alfalfa: A New Long-Season Variety for the Southwest, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 118 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1907).

[15]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1908, 42.

[16]Ibid.; see also "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 121.

Arabian alfalfa suited for the climate and soil of the Southwest was discovered by Hansen.[17] Fairchild brought many drouth resistant garden crops including okra, pumpkin, red pepper and cucumber for planting in arid climates.[18]

Mark Carleton's search in Russia for rust and drouth resistant wheats was responsible for most of the significant grain introductions. Of several varieties found by Carleton, three brought basic changes to the American wheat industry: Kubanka, a drouth resistant spring wheat; Kharkov, a hard red winter wheat; Kanred, a very hard red winter wheat.[19] The Carleton discoveries not only changed the character of the wheat industry, but also won the appreciation of the plant explorations by the government. An observer in the Department noticed that "no other crop has been so warmly welcomed by farmers in the regions suited to its growth."[20]

By the eve of World War One, over twenty million bushels of Carleton wheat had been grown. One authority

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Klose, America's Crop Heritage, 113.

[19] Mark Carleton, Macaroni Wheats, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 3 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901); A New Wheat Industry for the Semi-arid West, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Circular No. 18 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901). "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1900, xxxii; ibid., 1902, xxxiv; "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry," ibid., 1904, 87.

[20] J. H. Shepard, "Macaroni Wheat," Yearbook, 1903, 330.

estimated that "probably a third of the wheat acreage in 1939 was sown to varieties traceable to Carleton's introductions."[21]

Among the thousands of foreign seeds and plants introduced during the Wilson tenure, many brought new delights to urban dining rooms. From Persia came the honeydew melon,[22] and from Austria a flavorful horseradish.[23] The seedless grape and the Egyptian date graced American fruit bowls by 1904.[24] The mango and avocado made their appearance by the turn of the century.[25] By 1912 the Secretary could report that two new fruits were "creating a new fruit situation in California and Florida."[26] By 1910 the date palm "ceased to be a curiosity" and was an established dessert fruit industry.[27] Foreign plant investigations had not only promoted new phases of American agriculture, but were also gradually beginning to change the eating habits of the nation.

It has been estimated that between the creation of

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[21]Klose, America's Crop Heritage, 117.

[22]Ibid., 115.

[23]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 119.

[24]Ibid.

[25]P. H. Rolfs, "New Opportunities in Subtropical Fruit Growing," Yearbook, 1906, 439-444; William Taylor, "Promising New Fruits," Yearbook, 1910, 433.

[26]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 119.

[27]Ibid.

the Office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction in 1897 to World War Two over 180,000 new varieties were introduced. Of these, over half came to America during the Secretaryship of James Wilson. These accomplishments were in line with Wilson's ambition to reach the point in production "where we may become a people independent of the whole world as far as production is concerned."[28]

The Department's fight to eradicate disease from the fields and barns of America was one aspect of the overall plant to maintain and increase output. The Bureau of Animal Industry guided the Department's attack on animal diseases.[29] During the Wilson years, the Bureau met with greatest success in controlling foot-and-mouth disease, hog cholera, and Texas fever.

Prior to 1900 there had been no problem with foot-and-mouth disease among American livestock. In 1902, however, a severe and unexpected outbreak occurred in New England. After the Pathological Division confirmed the nature of the malady, Secretary Wilson quarantined the New England states and summoned several veterinarians to the locality. Because the

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[28]Wilson to John Wilson, December 11, 1905, Papers of the Secretary.

[29]One of the few monographs on the history of an individual bureau within the Department of Agriculture is U. G. Houck, The Bureau of Animal Industry of the United States Department of Agriculture, Its Establishment, Achievments, and Current Activities (Washington: Hayworth Printing Company, 1924). Because Dr. Houck worked in the Bureau for many years, this study presents interesting and valuable insights into the history of the Department.

disease was spreading rapidly, Wilson decided to resort to the "drastic action of quarantine, slaughter and disinfection."[30] The work of eradication progressed rapidly, and within two months the "country was practically free of the plague."[31] By October of 1903 all quarantines were removed. During the outbreak the government authorities destroyed over 4,000 animals.[32]

In 1908 a similar outbreak developed in Pennsylvania, New York, and Michigan. The Department employed the same plan, and again eradicated the disease. The 1908 epidemic took less than 3,500 head of livestock.[33] The means used to eradicate the disease were strict quarantine, careful inspection, the slaughter of all diseased and exposed animals, and disinfection of the premises.[34] Secretary Wilson maintained that the most effective weapon against foot-and-mouth disease

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[30]"Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1903, 47-57. Chief Daniel Salmon presents a detailed account of the Bureau's fight against foot-and-mouth disease in this report. See also, "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1905, xxviii.

[31]Ibid.

[32]Houck, The Bureau of Animal Industry, 283, 284.

[33]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1908, 27-30.

[34]D. E. Salmon, Foot-and-Mouth Disease: Warning to All Owners of Cattle, Sheep and Swine, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, Circular No. 38 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902).

was "a capable staff and organization."[35]

Of the accomplishments of his term, Wilson believed that the discovery of an effective preventive serum for hog cholera was the most significant.[36] Investigations into hog cholera began as early as 1878, but little was found until 1885 when the cholera bacillus was isolated. With this basic information the Bureau of Animal Industry began a long series of investigations to find a vaccination or treatment that would prevent or cure the disease.[37]

Early research by Daniel Salmon and Theobald Smith, however, ended in failure. When further work indicated that hogs which recovered from the disease were immune, Bureau researchers began to look for another factor in the cause of the disease.[38] Investigations in 1903 showed that hog cholera was caused by "an invisible microorganism" which existed in the blood and body fluid of the sick hog. With the knowledge that the cholera bacillus was merely an accessory factor in the disease, Department scientists, led by Marion

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[35]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 163.

[36]Wilson to William S. Harvey, December 11, 1906, Papers of the Secretary.

[37]Houck, The Bureau of Animal Industry, 158-159.

[38]See D. E. Salmon, Hog Cholera and Swine Plague, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, Farmers' Bulletin No. 24 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901.

Dorset, again began work on an anti-cholera serum.[39]

By the end of 1905 Dorset and his colleagues had proved that hogs could be protected from cholera by means of a serum.[40] The success of practical tests was sufficient to show that in the new serum the Department possessed the means to control hog cholera. By 1913 several plants were producing the government patented serum.[41]

The Department met with similar success in its campaign to eradicate Texas fever. As in the case of hog cholera work, the Department began Texas fever research early in the history of the Bureau of Animal Industry. In 1884 Theobald Smith conducted investigations into the cause of Texas fever. By the 1890's the scientific team of Smith, Cooper Curtice, and R. C. Stiles had proved that the tick was instrumental in carrying the infection from one animal to another.[42] Texas fever was the first disease in which science proved that a

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[39]M. Dorset, B. M. Bolton, C. N. McBryde, The Eitology of Hog Cholera, U.S. Department of Agriculture Bureau of Animal Industry, Bulletin No. 72 (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1905); "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry." Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1905, 34.

[40]E. A. De Schweinitz and M. Dorset, New Facts Concerning Eitology of Hog Cholera, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, Bulletin No. 77 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1906); "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1906, 143-145.

[41]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 168-169.

[42]Houck, The Bureau of Animal Industry, 318-320.

carrier transferred the causative germ to the victim.[43] One authority evaluates the discovery in the following terms: "The Bureau of Animal Industry has the distinction of being the first institution to discover that a disease can be transmitted in this manner."[44] The Department carried on experiments to develop an anti-fever serum from 1892 to 1906.[45] When this approach failed to produce satisfactory results.

Dip investigations had been carried on while Smith searched for a serum. Although several types had been discovered, it was the arsenical dip that proved to be most effective in tick eradication work.[46]

The Department instituted a systematic campaign to destroy the "Texas fever tick" in 1906. The Bureau of Animal Industry divided infected terrirories into districts and all cattle were examined and dipped. In the first two years of the tick cleanup, over 50,000 square miles of quarantined lands were released,[47] and by the end of 1907, 220 men were

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[43] Ibid., 321.

[44] Ibid., 321.

[45] Daniel Salmon and Theobald Smith, Texas Fever or Southern Cattle Fever, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, Circular No. 69 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905); "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1900, xxi; "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," ibid., 1902, 30. ibid., 1904, 56-57; "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," ibid., 1905, xxvi.

[46] "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," ibid., 1906, 137-140.

[47] Houck, Bureau of Animal Industry, 337.

working against the tick.[48] By 1923 the federal government had expended over $7,000,000 in its fight against Texas fever and the tick.

In commenting upon the tick eradication work of the Department of Agriculture, the Daily Drovers' Journal wrote in 1922:

> Since 1906, when the tick eradication work began, the Government officials have succeeded in freeing from quarantine 523,837 square miles of territory that was once the domain of the tick and within a short time . . . the entire country will be free. . . . Tick eradication work has already been worth untold millions of dollars to the Southern states.[49]

The Department of Agriculture was slowly defeating an old foe.

Just as the successes of the Wilson era resulted from years of prior investigation, many future successes would result from research begun under Wilson. In 1907 the Department began extensive studies of animal tuberculosis. Investigations into causes and cures of Malta fever, infectious abortion, glanders disease, and gid were also started by the Wilson scientists.[50] Although progress in diagnosis was made, the preventions and remedies were part of the future.

Just as the Bureau of Animal Industry sought to control animal diseases, the Bureau of Plant Industry attempted

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[48]"Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1909, 201.

[49]Quoted in Houck, Bureau of Animal Industry, 339.

[50]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 168-172.

to combat plant diseases. In the Bureau, Erwin F. Smith, brilliant plant pathologist, led a research team to victory over several plant maladies. In scientific circles, Smith gained international acclaim for the proof of his theory that bacteria could cause plant disease.[51] His laboratory became a world center for the study of plant problems.

Secretary Wilson placed the conquest of pear blight among the significant accomplishments of his Department.[52] Merton B. Waite conducted the Bureau's investigation into the pear blight problem, and discovered that insects could act as vectors in the spread of plant disease. After lengthy study, Waite devised a blight control plan, using sprays and improved cultivation methods. His findings were similar to those of H. A. Allard who discovered that aphids carried a virus which attacked tobacco plants.[53]

A monumental work in plant industry appeared in 1902 when William Orton discovered the "cure" for cotton wilt. He showed that it was possible to select wilt resistant plants and breed a strain of completely wilt resistant cotton.[54]

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[51]Harding, Two Blades of Grass, 89.

[52]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 137.

[53]Harding, Two Blades of Grass, 210.

[54]W. A. Orton, The Wilt Disease of Cotton and Its Control, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 27 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902); "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1902, 58-59.

Other Bureau research indicated that apple bitter-rot could be combatted by a Bordeaux mixture spray.[55] Fungus diseases of cranberries, dates, certain apple varieties, plums, cherries and certain nut trees were arrested by the use of various fungicide sprays.[56] Although many sprays failed to satisfactorily control disease, the Wilson era pioneered in this method of attacking disease. The Department found, however, that in the early days of the "New Agriculture" the most effective weapon against diseases was to breed or find disease resistant plants.

Closely allied to the control of animal and plant diseases was the Department's program to control insect damage in agriculture. Wilson's "scientific corps" made noteworthy progress in dealing with San Jose scale, the Mexican boll weevil, and the Gypsy moth.

The boll weevil was discovered in Texas in 1892, and gradually spread throughout the South, reaching Florida by 1910. Facing disaster, the South called for government help against the weevil. In 1904 Congress appropriated $170,000

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[55]Herman von Schrenk, The Bitter Rot of Apples, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 44 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903).

[56]Beverly Galloway, Spraying for Fruit Diseases, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Farmers' Bulletin No. 38 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1903); Fungicides and Their Use in Preventing Diseases of Fruit, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Farmers' Bulletin No. 243 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1908).

to aid the Department in its boll weevil research. During the Roosevelt administration, the federal government spent almost $1,000,000 in fighting the Mexican insect. Although scientists studied every phase of the boll weevil, they found no effective insecticide.[57] The Department's answer to the boll weevil came with the development of cotton plantation management by Seaman Knapp. Knapp's scheme was "to grow good crops even in the presence of the weevil." According to Knapp's plan, selection of an early cotton and proper cultivation methods could result in good crops--even in the presence of the weevil.[58]

In 1897 the gypsy moth, an enemy of timberlands, accidentally found its way from Europe to New England. Beginning in 1906 Congress allocated special funds to aid in the eradication of the pest. At the same time the San Jose scale, a destructive fruit insect, invaded the country. Researchers spent endless time investigating these and other insects.[59]

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[57] F. W. Mally, The Mexican Cotton-Boll Weevil, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Entomology, Farmers' Bulletin No. 130 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902); W. D. Hunter, The Most Important Step in the Cultural System of Cultivating the Boll-Weevil, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Entomology, Circular No. 56 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904); "Report of the Entomologist," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1904, 274-275; ibid., 1905, 278-280.

[58] "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 146.

[59] L. O. Howard and C. L. Marlatt, The San Jose Scale, Its Occurrences in the United States and the Remedies to be Used Against It, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Entomology, Bulletin No. 3 new series (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904); "Report of the Entomologist," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1900, 29-30; ibid., 1904, 273; ibid., 1905, 281; "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," ibid., 1906, 74.

In attempting to combat the San Jose scale and the gypsy moth, as well as other pests, the Department employed four techniques. First of all, birds that fed upon the specific insects were imported.[60] Secondly, parasites or "enemy insects" were established in the era of the moth or scale.[61] Thirdly, the Department perfected some chemical solutions to control specific insects. A lime-sulphur spray was effective against the San Jose scale while an arsenic spray helped control the moth.[62] The Department developed farm methods that would help in the control of the bugs. Although in some cases poison bait was tried, the Department found this approach ineffective. Again the answer to the problems of insect control would be found in a later era.

Another area of scientific investigation during the Wilson tenure concerned animal and plant breeding. The Department was slow to take up the work of animal breeding. Congress did not appropriate funds for this until 1904 when it set aside $25,000 "to begin animal husbandry."[63] The

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[60]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," ibid, 1902, lxxx.

[61]"Report of the Entomologist," ibid., 1905, 281-282.

[62]C. L. Marlatt, The Lime-Sulphur and Salt Wash, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Entomology, Circular No. 52 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904); Important Insecticides Directions for Their Preparation and Use, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Division of Entomology, Farmers' Bulletin No. 127 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902.

[63]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1906, 30.

Department did not establish an Office of Animal Husbandry until 1910. However, E. H. Riley began research work in animal genetics in 1906 with a comprehensive study of the effects of inbreeding guinea pigs. Although the Department began some experiment work in the breeding of horses and shorthorn cattle, little more than laboratory data emerged in the field of animal breeding before World War I.[64]

More tangible work resulted from plant breeding and seed selection experiments. Within a few years, the Bureau of Plant Industry produced wilt resistant cotton, drouth resistant corn, a broad leafed tobacco plant for cigar wrapping, cold resistant fruit trees, rust resistant asparagus, varieties of rust and drouth resistant wheat, and several "under glass" varieties of tomatoe and lettuce.[65] Also important to

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[64]D. E. Salmon, Animal Breeding and Feeding Investigations, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, Circular No. 77 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905; George Rommel, The Score Card in Stock Breeding, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Industry, Bulletin No. 76 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905); "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Animal Industry," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1909, 244-246.

[65]Mark Carleton, Investigation of Rusts, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 63 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904); W. W. Tracy Jr., American Varieties of Lettuce, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 69 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1904); L. C. Corbett, Tomatoes, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Farmers' Bulletin No. 220 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905); T. L. Lyon, Improving the Quality of Wheat, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 78 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905); "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 126-130.

urban markets was the appearance of the Easter Lily--a cross between a Philippine and a Bermuda lily.[66]

Beverly Galloway, Chief of the Bureau of Plant Industry, explained that the breeding and selection of plants and seeds was done "always with the idea of benefiting agriculture either directly by increasing, improving or saving a crop or indirectly by . . . giving advice which the farmer can turn to profitable account."[67]

Just as the breeding and selection of animals and plants were relatively new scientific efforts in the Department, so too was the scientific study of the soil. When Wilson became Secretary in 1897, Congress had appropriated $15,000 for soil study. By 1912, however, the Bureau of Soils budget had jumped to over $260,000.[68] Chief Milton Whitney directed the work of his Bureau along three lines: soil survey and map making, adaptation of soils to new crop varieties, and fertilizer investigation.

Whitney worked out a scheme of classifying soils with reference to both their origins and composition, which was used as the basis of soil surveys. During the Wilson era the

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[66] Production of Easter Lily Bulbs in the United States, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry, Bulletin No. 120 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1908).

[67] Beverly T. Galloway, "Progress and Some of the New Work of Plant Industry," Yearbook, 1907, 139.

[68] "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 150.

Bureau surveyed over 600,000 square miles--an area as large as the combined countries of Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Ireland.[69] By 1905 Whitney and his colleagues had prepared soil maps for distribution to farmers to guide their uses of the land.[70]

The Bureau's intensive research into tobacco soils was largely responsible for the success of the large leaf tobacco plant in the Connecticut valley.[71] By 1903 Whitney's research indicated that there was no apparent correlation between crop yields and dissolved salts in soils, and that many soils that contained plant nutrients in abundance varied widely in agricultural value. He maintained that the fertility of a soil could not be forecast by mere chemical analysis. Mechanical conditions, moisture content, soil management, and climate all entered into the picture, according to Whitney.[72]

The work of Whitney's Bureau indicated the complexity of soil science. Because of this complexity, the Bureau undertook long and detailed investigations into fertilizer usage. Although these studies still were in the early stages

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[69] Ibid., 151.

[70] "Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Soils," ibid., 1906, 345-347.

[71] Ibid., 152.

[72] Milton Whitney, Tobacco Soils, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, Farmers' Bulletin No. 86 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1905).

by 1910, Whitney concluded that fertilizers had to be adapted to the soil conditions existent in a specific area. He saw the need for a rational system of fertilization--a scientific approach to the productivity of the soil.[73]

According to the philosophy of the Wilson-directed Department, science had to have a practical application to be worthwhile. The Secretary expressed this view early in his career when he declared that "as far as this department is concerned, we do scarcely any work that has not in view the immediate application of science to some feature of agriculture."[74] The Department's investigations were only significant when they had practical results for the man on the farm. Therefore, the Department of Agriculture sought to relay its latest scientific information to the American farmer. The efforts of the Department to inform the farm population stemmed from Wilson's belief that education was the key to successful farming. The farmer, according to Wilson,

> needs more than the experience of a lifetime which he might get from his father; he needs to know what has been discovered with regards to the sciences that relate to agriculture. The farmer of today should be a farmer who has knowledge of the most recent discoveries of scientific agriculture, and he should know how to apply them.[75]

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[73]"Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 153.

[74]James Wilson to J. B. Weems, September 26, 1901, Papers of the Secretary.

[75]Wilson to Charles Burkett, December 12, 1901; to E. S. Chandler, September 19, 1907, ibid.

In order to inform the farmer of its practical findings, the Department developed and relied upon three essential techniques, the demonstration or "object lesson" farm, farmers' institutes and special exhibits, and published material such as farm bulletins and the Yearbook of the Department.

The demonstration farm came into use shortly after the turn of the century and by 1910 the work included "many thousands of farms" in 12 states.[76] Under the supervision of the Bureau of Plant Industry, special agents were assigned to work with farmers in the establishment of demonstration farms. The farmer agreed to farm part or all of his land in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture.[77]

During the first year, instruction was aimed at making a larger and more profitable crop at a reduced cost of production through improved seed beds, seed selection, cultivation methods and implements. The emphasis of the second year was on fertilizers, cover crops, and drainage. The third year concentrated on pasture, animal feed, and family foods.[78]

An important aspect of the volunteer demonstration work was the "field school" in which neighboring farmers

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[76]Seaman A. Knapp, "The Farmers" Cooperative Demonstration Work," Yearbook, 1909, 154.

[77]Ibid.

[78]Knapp, Yearbook, 1909, 155-157.

gathered to inspect, evaluate, and discuss the progress of the demonstration farm.[79] Through the process, thousands of farmers benefited from the improvements demonstrated on a few farms. Secretary Wilson observed that "each demonstration farm stirs the whole country and . . . farmers start at once to do their best."[80] The Department regarded this type of field work as "a system of adult education" to "place a practical object lesson before the farm masses, illustrating the best and most profitable methods."[81]

An outgrowth of the cooperative demonstration work was the development of "Boys' Corn Clubs," to interest the rural boys in the "wonderful possibilities of the soil."[82] According to this plan, parents furnished boys over 10 with an acre of land upon which to practice scientific farming. Seaman Knapp, who spent many years working for the Department in the South, estimated that some counties had 300 to 400 boys involved in this type of demonstration farming. In South Carolina, he said, one "corn club" boy raised 152½ bushels of corn on one acre while the state average was 16.[83]

By 1909 demonstration farm work included not only

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[79] Ibid., 158.

[80] Wilson to Knapp, March 25, 1903, Papers of the Secretary.

[81] Ibid., 153-154.

[82] Ibid., 158. See also, Dick J. Crosby, "Boys' Agricultural Clubs," Yearbook, 1909, 158.

[83] Knapp, Yearbook, 1909, 158.

crop growing but also irrigation and boll weevil control activity.[84] Agriculturalist Knapp best summed up the philosophy and objectives of this approach to rural education when he said: "The chemist and physicist require their students to work out their problems in the laboratory . . . demonstrtion work seeks to apply the same scientific method to farmers by requiring them to work out their problems in the soil."[85]

The Department of Agriculture's Office of Public Roads used a similar approach with its "object lesson roads," in which Department officials instructed local road builders in the use of materials and methods. The local authorities furnished the materials and common labor for the demonstration road, while the Office of Public Roads provided the engineering skill and machinery. The Department never constructed more than a mile of demonstration road leaving completion to local contractors.[86] During an average year, the Department built 14 to 17 roads, and by 1906 there were 113 such projects in 32 states.[87]

In 1903 the Department of Agriculture officially

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[84]Wilson to W. L. Stickler, June 27, 1904, Papers of the Secretary.

[85]Knapp, Yearbook, 1909, 159-160. See also, Wilson to W. J. Spillman, May 8, 1905, Papers of the Secretary.

[86]Logan Waller Page, "Object Lesson Roads," Yearbook, 1906, 138-141.

[87]Ibid., 144; Wilson to Finnis J. Garret, May 22, 1907, Papers of the Secretary.

became associated with the farmers' institute approach to education when Congress appropriated funds for the appointment of an institute specialist in the Office of Experiment Stations.[88] The farmers' institute method had been used on the state and local levels for several years, but there had been little effort to organize the institute work nationally. The institute specialist was given the dual task of strengthening the already existing state organizations through a national system and of making institute work "more effective for the dissemination of the results of the . . . Department of Agriculture and of experiment stations."[89] The Department viewed the farm institute as a system of rural education "to carry valuable agricultural information to farming people at their homes."[90]

The farmers' institutes were short courses, usually one or two days, designed to show the farmer the latest techniques of scientific agriculture. The sessions consisted of lectures, demonstrations, and discussion of farm issues. The study of departmental farm bulletins usually was included in most institutes.

In 1903 almost one million farmers attended 3,179

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[88]John Hamilton, "The Farmer's Institute," Yearbook, 1903, 149-150. James Wilson to D. C. Kauffman, December 11, 1903, Papers of the Secretary.

[89]Hamilton, Yearbook, 1903, 150.

[90]Ibid., 150-151.

institutes, at a cost of only 2.2 cents per person.[91] By 1910 over 5,000 institutes were held with an attendance of over two and a half million farmers.[92] Specialized institutes began to develop to meet the needs of certain groups. In Georgia, institutes were held for rural teachers, while California conducted over 40 for farm women.[93] Several states began "railroad institutes." Special trains were equipped with demonstrations, literature and lecturers stopping in rural communities for an hour or two of demonstration and discussion. Over 150,000 farmers participated in this activity during 1909.[94] In California such a train stopped at 197 towns where over 40,000 observed its work.[95]

The Department also cooperated with special exhibits in its attempt to reach the farmer with scientific information. According to the editor of the Wisconsin Agriculturalist over 13,000,000 people attended the farm demonstrations and displays at the St. Louis World Fair.[96] The Department's exhibits at the National Corn Exposition of 1909 in Omaha

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[91]Hamilton, Yearbook, 1903, 152.

[92]United States Department of Agriculture, Annual Report of the Office of Experiment Stations, 1909, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1910), 50.

[93]"The Farmers' Institutes in the United States, 1909," ibid., 331-333.

[94]Ibid., 50.

[95]Ibid., 331.

[96]Quoted in Twentieth Century Farmer (Omaha), January 11, 1905, 10.

drew daily 10,000 farmers of which many participated in discussions and demonstrations.[97]

Although demonstrations, exhibits, and institutes served to educate many American farmers, the publications of the Department reached more farm homes than any other educational device. Farmers' bulletins informed the farm population on every phase of agriculture from the selection of quality seed to the placement of the bathtub in the modern farm home. Secretary Wilson demanded that the scientific investigations of his Department be transferred to farm bulletins "in the language of the people with little use of technical words."[98]

The use of the bulletin grew rapidly during the Wilson years. In 1900 the Department published 18 new bulletins and reprinted 90 with a combined circulation of almost three million copies.[99] By 1908 the figure had risen to over four million copies,[100] while two years later, the Secretary reported that his Department had published 1,982 "bulletins,

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[97]Dick J. Crosby, "Progress of Agricultural Education, 1909," Annual Report of the Office of Experiment Stations, 1909, 277-280. See also, George M. Rommel, "The Educational Value of Livestock Exhibitions," Yearbook, 1902, 259-264.

[98]Wilson to J. B. Weems, September 26, 1901, Papers of the Secretary.

[99]"Report of the Editor, Division of Publications" Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1900, 117-120.

[100]Annual Report of the Office of Experiment Stations, 1908, (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1909), 52.

circulars, and reports" with over twenty-five million copies "for distribution to the farmers in every section of the country."[101] Wilson lamented the fact that demand for the bulletins was "far in excess of the Department's ability to supply."[102] Each year the Department also published a half million copies of the Yearbook which contained the Secretary's report as well as informative articles on scientific farming. Most of these found their way into farm homes.[103]

In 1912 at the close of his Secretaryship, James Wilson captured both the function and the spirit of his Department when he observed:

> It came to learn and it stayed to teach. Its influence penetrates the remotest neighborhood. It performs a mission of welfare and happiness to farmers and to the whole Nation. The millions of dollars that it costs are returned in tens of millions of wealth saved and wealth produced.
>
> During the 16 years it has progressed from the kindergarten through the primary, middle and upper grades of development until now it has a thousand tongues that speak with authority. Its teachings, its disconceries, and its improvements are permeating the national agricultural life.
>
> . . . A choice corps of scholarly experts in their special lines of endeavor has been growing in membership . . . . No great work can be begun,

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[101]"Report of the Secretary," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1910, 133.

[102]Ibid., 134.

[103]Ibid. See also, Wilson to J. W. Randell, January 17, 1905. Papers of the Secretary.

> nor sustained, by this department without such men.[104]

The Department of Agriculture "came to learn" what caused Texas fever, how to destroy San Jose scale, what crop to grow in the arid West, how to farm efficiently in the presence of the boll weevil. The Wilson "corps of scholarly experts" sought through long years of research the answers to these questions, many times with success, many times with failure.

As Wilson so many times averred, "Science for the sake of science is worthless;" thus, the Department of Agriculture "stayed to teach." Its educational activities attempted to relate the scientific findings of the Department to practical farming. Scientific studies of the boll weevil were of little importance unless it led to application in the field and demonstrations in better farming methods. An investigation into soil content was worthless unless it showed the farmer how to better use his land.

This was the heart and spirit of the Department of Agriculture under James Wilson. Science and education teamed together for the betterment of American agriculture and the welfare of the nation.

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[104] "Report of the Secretary of Agriculture," Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture, 1912, 248-259.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

Near the end of the Roosevelt administration, the editor of The Ohio Farmer seemed to express the agrarian attitude toward the President when he wrote that "Theodore Roosevelt is honest, sincere, means what he says. In ability, courage of convictions, pure life and genuine patriotism the United States has never produced a more perfect type . . . ."[1] This urban, Eastern "straight New York" President had won both the affection and the confidence of rural America.

With few exceptions the farm press had supported the Roosevelt policies that concerned American agriculture. When Roosevelt spearheaded the movement for a federal irrigation program for the arid West, the Nebraska Farmer urged its readers to support the proposal because its enactment had "at heart the greatest development of our country."[2] The Northwestern Agriculturalist believed that Roosevelt's approach to

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[1]The Ohio Farmer, May 23, 1908.

[2]The Nebraska Farmer, XXXIV (June 19, 1902), 15.

the arid West was "for the good of the future of American farming."[3]

The President's creation of a commission to study the condition of country life captured the imaginations of most farm editors. A North Carolina writer editorialized that "our conviction is that the Commission will accomplish untold good by directing the attention . . . to the pressing needs of rural life."[4] The Independent Farmer and Western Swine Breeder supported the commission because it "is in line with his [Roosevelt's] great work for the preservation of natural resources."[5] The Nebraska Farmer seemed to represent agrarian opinion when it asserted that "this . . . is a national problem and President Roosevelt is adding another star to his constellation."[6]

Of all the agricultural policies or functions of the government, none received such united praise as the Department of Agriculture and its Secretary James Wilson. When rumors spread in 1902 that Wilson might resign as Secretary, the Ohio Farmer expressed the sentiment of the rural community when it declared:

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[3]Northwestern Agriculturalist, XVII (June 15, 1902), 244.

[4]The Progressive Farmer, quoted in Literary Digest, XXXVII (December 26, 1908), 965.

[5]Independent Farmer and Western Swine Breeder, August 13, 1908.

[6]Nebraska Farmer, LXVI (August 26, 1908), 720.

> The farmers of this country want no change in the agricultural portfolio. Secretary Wilson's administration has been eminently satisfactory. Few men have the natural and acquired qualifications for this important position than he has . . . . He fully sustains the dignity of his position, and is a worthy and honored representative of the farming class at the Capitol. He is a man of the people. He has endeared himself to the farmers of the country by his attitude towards them . . . -- always approachable, kind, considerate, genial and friendly.[7]

When one reviews the list of accomplishments of the Department under Wilson, it is not difficult to understand why American farmers gave it such enthusiastic support. A 1909 editorial in the Nebraska Farmer illustrated the importance which the farmer attached to the Department when it declared:

> The United States Department of Agriculture, especially under the present secretary, has been a great factor in the improvement of farm conditions in this country. It has been one of the most potent influences in disseminating agricultural knowledge . . . . Through its agency a large number of new and valuable crops have been introduced from foreign lands and placed where such crops were needed in this country. Its scientific departments have made many important discoveries in different lines of agriculture. All these forms of activities are highly commendable and have our hearty support.[8]

The American farmer also found much to like in Roosevelt's policies toward business. The old Populist anti-monopoly and Wall street bias still remained as an intricate part of agrarian thought. Middlemen, railroaders, and monopolists were suspect--even in an age of prosperity. Roosevelt's

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[7] The Ohio Farmer, January 23, 1902.

[8] The Nebraska Farmer, LXVII (January 13, 1909), 28.

"trust-busting" and railroad control attitudes appealed to the agrarian spirit. Secretary Wilson reflected this when he reported to the President in 1905 that "You cannot know how proud these western people are of your work . . . . Western people generally will make it a personal matter with any legislator who thwarts your efforts along railroad legislation lines."[9]

The Twentieth Century Farmer found Roosevelt's position on trusts in accord with good agrarian tradition averring that "Theodore Roosevelt is a friend of the people. He believes sincerely in promoting their interests . . . . He is not the enemy of wealth, but is the foe of monopoly."[10] In similar tone, the Farm, Stock and Home defended the President against those who blamed him for the panic of 1907 on the grounds that "it was the result of anti-business policies which would bring such disorder anyway."[11] To the farm press Theodore Roosevelt appeared as the champion of agrarian interests.

It is not strange that the farm press and population found much to admire and respect in Theodore Roosevelt and his administration. Just as the coming of Roosevelt to the White House stimulated new policies toward business and

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[9]Wilson to Roosevelt, September 19, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

[10]Twentieth Century Farmer, March 8, 1905.

[11]Farm, Stock and Home, XXIV (January 1, 1908), 4.

conservation, it brought a fresh approach to rural questions. Roosevelt's attitudes and policies toward the agricultural segment of the economy offered a sharp contrast to those of his predecessors. Roosevelt was the first president of industrial America to realize that agriculture's change in the nations economy would affect the nation's economic structure.

This concern for the future of American farming found expression in the President's words and actions. Few presidents had ever or would ever talk more about the problems of farming than Theodore Roosevelt. Like those of most political leaders, his speeches contained the glittering generalities about the character and nature of the agricultural calling. He continually spoke of the "rugged independence," or "the greatness of the agricultural calling," or the "ideal citizen type" which farm life created. The important point, however, is that these words were accompanied by a genuine interest in agrarian matters and by actions aimed at bettering or uplifting the social and economic aspects of farm living.

With the President's efforts, the administration secured new reclamation and land policies aimed at a more orderly approach to the public lands. To Roosevelt these policies had to "be in the interest of the . . . homemaker who comes to found a home and rear his children in the land."[12] The

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[12]Roosevelt to Thomas Patterson, December 21, 1905, Roosevelt Papers.

calling of a commission to investigate rural life indicated the President's desire to know "the facts" about farm living, to identify existing problems, and to create national interest in agricultural issues. Roosevelt averred that there was "no other material question of greater importance . . . before the American people."[13] The increased budgets and activities of the Department of Agriculture under Roosevelt reflected the growing concern of the federal government for the future of American farming. Roosevelt was in sympathy with, and supported the work of, the Department and its Secretary James Wilson. No doubt the President's idea that "the prime thing to be done for the farmer . . . is to help him help himself,"[14] was responsible for this position.

Four concluding points must be stressed. First, during the age of Theodore Roosevelt, there were few demands for direct governmental action to either study or solve farm problems. There were problems to worry about, but for the most part they were questions of prosperity, not adversity. The agricultural economy had reached a level of stability and prosperity, and the farm population was generally satisfied with the status quo. The agricultural community did not call for immediate action to remedy land law loopholes or to uplift the conditions of American rural life. For the most

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[13]Roosevelt to L. H. Bailey, August 10, 1908, ibid.

[14]Roosevelt to Herbert Myrick, September 10, 1908, ibid.

part these came about because of Roosevelt's progressive impulse to examine existing policies and institutions and his commitment to social and economic justice. Roosevelt's agricultural actions were more the products of the progressive spirit than rural discontent.

Secondly, the Roosevelt administration marked the beginning of a new relationship between agriculture and the federal government. These years witnessed a break with the laissez faire philosophy of the Cleveland-McKinley approach to agriculture. Not since the enactment of the Homestead law in 1862 had an administration concerned itself particularly with rural problems. During the times of adversity of the Alliance-Populist Era, the farmer found little sympathy or concern for his plight in the White House. Under Cleveland some activities of the Department of Agriculture were actually curtailed when Secretary Morton reduced departmental spending. In contrast Roosevelt vigorously supported increased agricultural appropriations. The appointment of the Country Life Commission indicated that the President was not content unless he knew "the facts" about rural problems. It was clear that under Roosevelt the relationship between agriculture and the federal government was entering a new era.

Thirdly, Roosevelt was the first president of industrial America to view farming as a business as well as a way of life. In his address, "The Man Who Works With His Hands," he lamented the fact that American education had hitherto

"been well nigh wholly lacking on the side of industrial training, of a training that fits a man . . . for the farm."[15] At the same time he stressed the need for a more "business-like" approach to the vocation of farming. Roosevelt's support of the agrarian cooperative movement was based upon his belief that farming was a business and that "organization has become necessary in the business world."[16] To Roosevelt, agriculture was as much a business as industry.

Lastly, indicative of Roosevelt's new attitude toward rural problems and questions, was his reliance upon the trained professional--the service intellectual. Both the Public Land Commission and the Country Life Commission were manned by either service intellectuals such as Liberty Hyde Bailey of Cornell and Frederick Newell of the Geological Survey or well-informed laymen such as Henry Wallace, editor of Wallace's Farmer, and William Beard, editor of Great West Magazine. The leadership of the Department of Agriculture--James Wilson, Gifford Pinchot, Daniel Salmon, Beverly Galloway, Milton Whitney--represented the growing dependence of the government upon the trained professional. Roosevelt's appointment of Willet Hayes, Professor of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota, as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, points to the fact that the President desired to have professional men in the Department.

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[15]"The Man Who Works With His Hands," Works of TR, XVI, 131-132.

[16]"Sixth Annual Message," ibid, 374-376.

In many ways Roosevelt led the federal government into a new relationship with American agriculture. By mid-twentieth century standards, the Roosevelt policies and attitudes do not appear to be startling or revolutionary. Yet, when viewed against the backdrop of the 19th century, they appear in proper perspective. Roosevelt brought change to many areas of government policy, including agriculture. The Roosevelt era was really one of transition in agricultural policy from the laissez faire approach of Cleveland and McKinley to the paternalism of Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal.

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