The Farmers Union "Triangle" Program in North Dakota

Harold S. Hepner
THE FARMERS UNION "TRIANGLE"
PROGRAM IN NORTH DAKOTA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science at South Dakota State College

-1945-

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THE FARMERS UNION "TRIANGLE"

PROGRAM IN NORTH DAKOTA

A Farmers Movement with a Clutch

A thesis submitted to the Department of Rural Sociology at South Dakota State College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science.

Harold S. Hepner
South Dakota State College
June 1945

Approved for the Department

Approved for the Graduate Committee
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Part I

INTRODUCTORY
PART I
INTRODUCTORY

The Problem

The many economic hardships which faced American farmers from 1900 through 1926 were varied in nature. Crop failures through unfavorable weather, marketing conditions and factors involving purchases, credits, loans, and transportation were but a few of the early problems of the farmers. Purchase of land and equipment at high prices and at peak times and the marketing of products during unfavorable marketing conditions brought many farmers face to face with bankruptcy.

Situations facing North Dakota farmers during the same period were not much different from those confronting farmers throughout the rest of the United States. In nearly every respect the basic needs of the farmers were the same, the difference being only in the nature of the commodity produced.

Belief that the farmers were being exploited by corporate interests, unfair practices growing out of transportation policies of the railroads, and other similar factors caused many North Dakota farmers to feel that they were victims of many economic grievances. For a long time they believed that the system and practices of marketing their grain were unfair and unjust, and that bankers, merchants, and professional politicians were in league with millers to exploit them.\footnote{Bizzell, W. B., \textit{The Green Rising}, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1926, p. 180.}
It was argued that under existing conditions the price of mill feeds and flour in North Dakota included a double hauling charge at high freight rates—the cost of freight on the original grain to the terminals, and the cost of the return haul. In these conditions and the location of the big packing houses in St. Paul and Chicago, adding further difficulties besides the freight cost to the problem of feeding meat animals for the market, the college professors discerned a great economic waste which was a bar to well-balanced production and against impoverishment. They saw with alarm that millions of dollars' worth of soil values, in the shape of natural fertility, was shipped out of the state every year, never to return. They saw also an ill-balanced type of production, a huge gamble with the elements and the market, frequently resulting in ruin for the farmer. And they saw discomforts and privations which formed an almost insuperable bar to a healthy, natural, pleasant and permanent rural life.¹

In order to establish a criteria or give a basis for evaluation of the data presented in this thesis, it is necessary to show the place of farm organizations in social theory, and the following material is presented with that objective.

The Place of Farm Organizations in Social Theory

The adverse farming conditions which existed in North Dakota led to the establishment in 1915 of the "Farmers Nonpartisan Political League" which later became better known as the "Nonpartisan League," and which still functions, not as a farmers association, but rather, as a political

faction. Other farmers' organizations designed to assist farmers in their problems and which operated in North Dakota included the Grange, the Farmers Alliance, The Farmers Equity Union, and other similar organizations, each of which endeavoured to assist the North Dakota farmers in solving their problems.

Conditions were not too greatly changed in 1926 when the North Dakota Farmers Union organized and began its career to help in satisfying needs of the farmers in that state, and in so doing, complied with social theory as regards a social institution.

While it may be true that other state divisions of the Farmers Union operate in the same general manner as does the NDFU, this thesis will confine itself primarily to the North Dakota organization.

"Social theory teaches that every great field of social life has its collection of institutions ranging from those which satisfy vital and permanent needs, to those relatively superficial and transitory."¹

The NDFU with a program based on education, legislation, and cooperation definitely occupies a position in the range of social institutions as it does satisfy the basic needs which led to its establishment.

The North Dakota Farmers Union may be considered as a pivotal institution involving three phases—educational, economic, and industrial. There is nothing unique in the problem of social theory concerning the NDFU as a farmers movement, as many of its problems were and still are typical of any farmers movement.

Farmers movements, like many others, were born out of necessity, and as their need most often arose out of economic hardship caused by wars, panics, drouth, and other conditions, they found it necessary to organize for specific economic action.

"Each time an agrarian movement has arisen its magnitude has been greater than those of any previous movement. This is because each has had the experience of previous movements to guide it and because it is made up of an ever more intelligent agrarian population. It is probable that the experience has now been wide enough and varied enough, and the intelligence of the farming class is now high enough, that our present set of agrarian organizations, or some immediately succeeding set of agrarian organizations, will be a permanent part of our nation's economic machinery."

In his text "Rural Sociology," C. C. Taylor also comments on farmers organization in the following manner:

"Two generations ago farmers did not belong to organizations of any kind except major social institutions and traditional political parties. One generation ago only a few of the more radical belonged to the Wheel, the Alliance, and similar organizations. Today a majority of the farmers belong to one or more farmers' organizations. They are all a part of an agrarian movement—a movement that has arisen

inevitably out of the fact that farmers recognize that they are performing a definite, essential, and abiding part of society's labor; the fact that the development of industrial technologies—especially transportation technologies—has converted farming into a commercial enterprise and thrown farmers into a price and market regime; the fact that the enlightenment of the farmer has reached such a status that he knows what is happening in other sections of the population and therefore knows that he is not a part of prosperous and polite society; the fact that he has observed that other sections of population, particularly those that have more or less common economic interests, have gained the ends which they sought most quickly by means of organized economic action. The facts just stated are natural products of social evolution in all Western civilization. They are part of our developing social organization.  

In his "History of Agriculture in Europe and America," N.S.B. Gras, referring to improvement of agricultural conditions, said, "A better technique of agriculture aided a great deal, and cooperative societies were pointing the way to self-help as an alternative to governmental assistance." This statement may be interpreted to indicate that the cooperatives were instrumental in assisting the farmers by giving them an opportunity to weigh the sociological-economic benefits available

1. Ibid, pp 490-491

to them through membership in the cooperative organization, as against the assistance offered by governmental regimentation. In late years, the government has realized the necessity of educating the farmers, and excellent work in this regard is being conducted by the Extension Service, the Farm Security Administration, and similar federal agencies and state colleges. In the main, however, much of the aid given farmers has been based on dollars and cents subsidies.

Officers of the North Dakota Farmers Union have aided in obtaining and adapting governmental assistance to the best interests of NDFU members.

In reference to the accomplishment of cooperatives, Gras writes:

"Cooperation has brought great economic gains to American farmers generally. It has increased self-respect, and taught habits of business-like dealing. Perhaps we might discover, if we had all the facts, that while in the future, direct economic gains would greatly exceed losses, in the past they have not done so. So far, a system of education, agricultural cooperation promises to become an efficiency agent in production.‖

In the above statement, Gras specifically declares that cooperative agriculture has partially satisfied some of the farmers' needs. Success of the NDFU program is evidenced by the fact that memberships in it and other cooperatives have increased during periods of economic losses. Had they not been successful, the farmers would have withdrawn from cooperative membership.

1. Ibid., p. 218.
"That the farm cooperatives, despite mistakes in leadership and policy, despite the trying years of the depression, despite the opposition of competitors, should hold their membership so nearly at its peak, and with increased volume of business, denotes a significant trend." 1

Another significant rural sociological aspect of the Farmers Union was presented by H. V. Knight, when, in referring to the various Farmer Union cooperatives, said, "All of these cooperatives are devices which help the families of the Farmers Union gain the total end—security on the land and a decent standard of living." 2 Social theory is woven into this statement by Knight, as security and a decent standard of living are definitely basic needs of any group.

The following comment by E. B. Fowler in his book, "Consumer cooperation in America" specifically refers to activities of the North Dakota Farmers Union. Attention to the book was suggested by NDFU secretary A. L. Hellebust.

"In North Dakota, the state that has been hit so terrifically hard these last few years, first by collapsing grain prices and then later by years of drouth, Consumer Cooperation is working a small miracle in the thinking of farmers. This is the state in which the Farmers Union Central Exchange has swept into second place as a state-wide distributor of gasoline and oil. Back of that sweep of consumer organization there is a story of economic education by the people themselves.

"Go to North Dakota today and talk to any of the farmers at a cooperative filling station as they stop for gas. They will amaze you by their grasp of economics. And their economics are sound."

"Within the Farmers Union Movement in North Dakota there is a real educational program for youth. In the townships all over the state the children are being brought together and educated along cooperative lines."

"These children of North Dakota are being raised on cooperation. The Farmers Union has worked out a plan of education by which the children are trained to sell the idea of cooperation to their parents. They are trained in basic economics and drilled in the cooperative philosophy. The program of youth education is pushing the cooperative organization of North Dakota faster than any other single factor."¹

Objective

The main objective of this thesis is to show how a farmers' movement has met the basic and collective needs of the farmers in North Dakota.

The second objective is to show that the NDFU, through educational, cooperative and legislative activities, has, to a large extent, satisfied the needs of North Dakota farmers.

Methods

Methods used in obtaining data for this thesis included a case study of activities of the North Dakota Farmers Union, and a historical review of its activities. Such statistics as appear in the thesis were made available from the NDFU headquarters. Research methods employed involved the study of numerous books dealing with agricultural life problems, farmer movements, marketing practices, and cooperative principles. A bibliography is appended to this thesis.

Other material studied included Farmers Union publicity material and information bulletins, annual reports of the NDFU state meetings, extracts from talks by men prominent in cooperative activities, issues of the North Dakota Union Farmer published as the official organ of the NDFU, copies of the National Union Farmer issued by the national association, and numerous pamphlets published by both the national and North Dakota organizations. Several visits to NDFU headquarters at Jamestown, North Dakota, to obtain statistical data and to interview organization officials; two visits to Williston, North Dakota; and questioning of various farmers and city people as to their reactions concerning the Farmers Union also were means used to obtain some of the material and thoughts presented in this thesis. Several conferences with Glenn J. Talbott, president of the North Dakota Farmers Union, however, brought out more evidence as to the tremendous activity of the NDFU and its parent organization than did the many hours occupied in perusal of texts and other reference material.

So far as it can be determined, the specific subject and problem presented in this thesis have not been used in the preparation of any previous thesis.
The only terms which may need defining in this thesis are the references made to the Farmers Union Organizations. The parent organization, the "Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America" is referred to in this thesis as the "Farmers Union." When specifically referring to the North Dakota division of the Farmers Union, the state name is prefixed or the abbreviation "NDFU" is used. When statements include both organizations the term "Farmers Union" is used.

The several charts presented are self-explanatory and need no further clarification.

The general outline or plan of this thesis is divided into four parts; the first of which relates the problem; the place of farmers movements in social theory, the objective, and methods used in the study. The second part contains a historical review. Part three contains interpretation of data and illustrative charts showing the NDFU in action. Part four is devoted to the summary and conclusions and contains significant effects and implications growing out of the evidence and conclusions as to the significance of the thesis as it affects North Dakota and rural sociology. Part four is followed by a bibliography.
PART II

HISTORICAL REVIEW

Before delving into the ramifications of the North Dakota Farmers Union, (the North Dakota Division, Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America) it is first necessary to present a historical background of the organization which it is chartered, the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, organized in 1902; pertinent facts concerning the BCFU chartered in 1927; and other material necessary for proving the problem at hand.

A previous statement of the plight in which North Dakota farmers found themselves prior to organization of the BCFU shows that the farmers did have basic needs and that positive action was necessary if they were to survive. Also indicated previously is the fact that the BCFU had the benefit of experiences of other farmers movements established or organized in North Dakota prior to 1920, and that such benefits may be a factor in the success of that organization.

The Farmers Union

The farmers' educational and cooperative Union of America, commonly known as the "Farmers Union," was organized at Pullman, Illinois, in 1866 by a small group of farmers. Many of the organizations had been founded by the Farmers Alliance, and had seen that organization change from a strictly economic group, socially, into a political party (the Populist party) in 1890 and later became the American Party.
PART II

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A previous statement of the plight in which North Dakota farmers found themselves prior to organization of the NDFU shows that the farmers did have basic needs and that positive action was necessary if they were to survive. Also indicated previously is the fact that the NDFU had the benefits of experiences of other farmers movements established or organized in North Dakota prior to 1926, and that such benefits may be a factor in the success of that organization.

The Parent Organization

The Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America, commonly known as the "Farmers Union," was organized at Point, Texas, in 1902 by a small group of farmers. Many of the organizers had been members of the Farmers Alliance, and had seen that organization evolve first into a strictly economic group, secondly, into a political party (the Populist Party) and then into oblivion.
Based upon their experience in the Alliance, the organizers of the Farmers Union, in the constitution of the new organization, prohibited active participation by the organization in either partisan politics or religious discussions. Emphasis was placed on the educational and cooperative platforms of the new group, as the founding fathers of the Farmers Union were of the firm belief that only through education and mutual cooperation could the farmers solve the many problems confronting them.

The American Society of Equity

It may be an interesting sidelight for the readers to know that another farm organization was created at about the same time as was the Farmers Union. The other group, the American Society of Equity, was founded in Indianapolis, Indiana. It, too, grew rapidly, and was strong in many parts of the country, but its strength waned, and it faded out of the picture in 1935 when its last stronghold in Wisconsin was merged with the Farmers Union. Even today, however, the name Equity is still identified with agriculture, as the Wisconsin Farmers Union organization is officially named the "Farmers Educational and Cooperative Equity Union of Wisconsin."

The Rochdale Plan

Another interesting sidelight on the Farmers Union background is the application of the Rochdale theory to the Farmers Union modus operandi. The first application of the Rochdale theory in the United
States was in the 1870's when the farm group called the "Patrons of Husbandry" was flourishing. This organization is better known as the "Grange." During the early years of the Grange, a speaker from England was one of its convention attractions and told of the successful activities of the weavers of Rochdale, England, who, prior to their organization, suffered keenly because of the advent of the machine age which spearheaded the industrial revolution.

These weavers, residents of Toad Lane, a squalid section of Rochdale, were the prototypes of the garment workers who later toiled in the large lofts housing the garment-making industry in metropolitan cities of the eastern United States. Unlike the latter, who sought refuge under the protecting arm of labor unions and legal statutes, the twenty-eight Rochdale weavers banded themselves together, after a pitiful struggle, and established a food store from which, through their cooperative efforts, they were enabled to purchase sufficient food of good quality to exist.

1. Although the Rochdale weavers opened their store in Toad Lane on December 21, 1844, it was 1875 before the first application of the Rochdale theory was formally adopted in the United States when the National Grange in 1875 at its annual meeting formally endorsed the Rochdale principles urging that commercial enterprises under its auspices adopt these in their practices. The rules promulgated by the Grange evidently had in mind principally their application to cooperative stores." (See, Wilson, Social Economics of Agriculture, Macmillan, New York, 1933, p. 277).

Linking of the Rochdale plan into the activities of the Farmers Union and into this thesis is not as far-fetched as one might think, as some of the principles of the Farmers Union are based on those laid down by the weavers of Toad Lane, the four best-known of which are: one man; one vote; patronage refund; earning of capital limited; and open membership.

As previously mentioned, the Grange in this country was the first organization to adopt the principles of the Rochdale plan, but members of the Grange at that time failed to grasp the deep-seated significance of the Toad Laners' ideas, and the speaker from England returned to his own country feeling that his missionary work here had failed.

A former Grange member, Owen Dornblaser, one of the organizers of the Farmers Union, remembered the talk he had heard at the convention, and the seeds transplanted from England many years prior to the birth of the Farmers Union, again were planted, and nourished as a part of the Farmers Union creed.

In the building of cooperative businesses there also has come an understanding of a better way of life, according to Mrs. Edwards, in pointing out the value of adherence to the Rochdale plan.1 It is here that the educational principles of the Farmers Union made their first stride.

Returning to the background picture of the Farmers Union, the parent organization, while resolved to keep the group out of partisan politics, nevertheless stressed the value of helpful legislation, and

1. Ibid, p. 112.
emphasized the necessity for sound education of its members into cooperative principles, and for the need of cooperation itself. These three factors are known as the Farmers Union "triangle."

Briefly stated, the attitude taken by the Farmers Union towards legislation is that it seeks only enactments which aid in a fair distribution of national income, lower interest rates, and laws both protective to and which will facilitate the expansion of the cooperative movement.

The "triangle" of the Union, is the symbol of the three-sided program of the Farmers Union.

CHART I

```
\[
\begin{tikzpicture}
  \node (cooperation) at (0,0) {Cooperation};
  \node (legislation) at (2,2) {Legislation};
  \node (education) at (0,2) {Education};
  \draw (cooperation) -- (legislation);
  \draw (cooperation) -- (education);
  \draw (legislation) -- (education);
\end{tikzpicture}
\]
```

Education, as the base of the triangle, deeply involves both the social, economic, and legislative aspects of the lives of farm people. It broadens their horizons and enables them to recognize their problems and to join with their neighbors in solving them.

The cooperative side of the triangle teaches Farmer Union members the necessity for working together to build cooperative businesses as means towards economic and political democracy.
Legislation, the third side of the triangle, seeks to obtain enactments which protect the weak from the strong, and seeks to insure the farms of America for the farm family.

The North Dakota Farmers Union

The North Dakota Farmers Union was organized in Jamestown, North Dakota, in 1926, following the establishment of the Farmers Union Terminal Association at St. Paul, Minnesota, where, for the first time, as a result of the cooperative action, farmers were rewarded for the high protein quality of their grain. Another principal activity of the first year was the creation of the Farmers Union Exchange to handle twine, flour, etc.

Charles C. Talbott

Synonymous with the name "Farmers Union" in North Dakota, is the name "Talbott," as the gigantic Farmer Union structure in North Dakota today was created through the wisdom, foresight, and unselfish devotion of Charles C. Talbott to create a better way of life for North Dakota and its farmers. His recognition that to be successful, a farm organization had to go deeper than the mere economic status of the farmer, led to the many educational and sociological phases of the NDFU. He felt that the very foundation of this organization was the individual, and that only through the individual, his home, his school, and even his church contacts, could a nucleus be established which would group themselves as an educational unit designed for cooperative effort. He realized that although the individual was the foundation of the organization, an individual alone could not cope with existing situations.
He believed, however, that an organization of local units, composed of individuals, working through a state organization, could bring about a truly educational and cooperative organization.

When, on April 11, 1937, Charles Talbott passed away, he left an inheritance to be enjoyed by all members of his organization—a farmer institution with its foundation so well laid that future generations may build upon it for years to come. In addition to devoting his very life itself to the NDFU, Charles Talbott also so inculcated the principles in which he believed into the heart and mind of his son, Glenn J. Talbott, that the latter, now president of the NDFU, has been able to hold aloft efficiently and capably the torch carried so high by his father.

Another member of the Talbott family, a daughter, Gladys Talbott Edwards, inspired by her father’s teachings, has made the educational program of the Farmers Union her life’s work, and is today the director of education of the national organization.

**NDFU Progress**

From its rather humble beginning in 1926, the NDFU has made great strides, and is today recognized as one of the outstanding state divisions of the national Farmers Union organization.

These strides were not made in one enormous leap. The NDFU sought to build slowly yet solidly, adapting the educational principle that before a child could run, it must first creep, then crawl, then walk—and then run.
As a result, from 1926 until this time, the NDFU for eighteen years has marched forward—one step at a time. True, it has met with obstacles, yet it has today reached an enviable goal.

A chronological history of the NDFU from 1927 through 1943, taken from the files of the organization at Jamestown, lists many of the principal activities of the organization. It reveals the "big things" that have been accomplished, yet behind each of the "big things" are the many, many "little things" which have tended to educate Farmer Union members; "little things" which have made for better home life, for happier neighborhoods, and yet, which, like mortar, insignificant among the bricks, have been essential to the construction and existence of the entire structure. Education of the farmer by the NDFU is embodied in both the brick and the mortar of their happiness and well-being.

CHART II

A CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY
of the
NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION AND THE NORTHWEST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION</th>
<th>COOPERATIVE GROWTH</th>
<th>LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1927 Farmers Union Herald goes to all members. First State Convention.</td>
<td>FU Terminal Association brings premiums for protein. Exchange set up to handle twine, flour, etc.</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929 First broadcasts from State Convention.</td>
<td>Several oil co-ops established. Exchange ships first car of gasoline. FU Livestock biggest firm on St. Paul market.</td>
<td>Fama Marketing Act sets up Farm Board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Weekly broadcasts begun on KFIR</td>
<td>Exchange reorganizes as FU Central Exchange. Drought relief given by F.U. Turkey pools started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>&quot;Lessons for Juniors&quot; grew into mimeographed paper, the &quot;Union Junior&quot;</td>
<td>Federal grading of turkeys inaugurated by FU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Lessons started for the younger FU children.</td>
<td>Turkey pools ship under &quot;Mon-Dak&quot; brand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>First college local at N.D. State College. Juniors sent to Washington by NW Legislative Committee.</td>
<td>West Fargo branch of livestock house opened. Poultry-feed plant at Williston and Minot. First Co-op tractor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>First winter session of Co-op Institute. First All-State Camp.</td>
<td>Central Exchange handles Co-op line of accessories, electrical appliances. First Co-op lockers at Casselton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>C.C. Talbott Memorial fund established after first president's death. First camp for leaders.</td>
<td>New FU Co-ops; Devils Lake Creamery, Minot Cafe, stores at Alice and Emden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>N.D. Union Farmer gets a full-time editor. First field worker added. Membership gain is 24%. Crew organizes Sargent County locals.</td>
<td>FU Service Association established to handle insurance. FU Grain Terminal Ass'n and Great Northern Turkey Co-op Inc. organized. Also Dickinson Creamery, Hettinger and Regent stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>New County unions in Pembina, Grand Forks, Walsh, Mercer, Dickey, Logan, McIntosh, Griggs, and Steele counties. Talbott Memorial Park bought.</td>
<td>FSA loans used to organize 56 FU Co-op elevators. First 12 rural FU credit unions organized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>County camps serve 32 counties. Farmers Union and FSA staff have joint conference.</td>
<td>GTA builds Superior and other terminals. Exchange doubles plant. Thirty new credit unions. Mandan store and Kenmare Creamery established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>Membership shows 63% gain. National conference for state boards held. State headquarters built. Sheridan and Pierce Counties are organized.</td>
<td>More than 2,000 take FU group insurance. Killdeer and New England stores established. Exchange, GTA, Livestock Commission have big volume.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legislative activities cited in Chart II are not to be construed as having originated in their entirety via the NDFU. That organization, however, did take an active part in favoring or opposing the various legislative matters listed. Incidentally, the North Dakota State college was responsible for inaugurating many of the legislative problems in the state. Other farmer groups assisted in the legislation program.
**NDFU Membership**

Today, in 1945, the North Dakota Farmers Union is organized in 51 of the 53 counties in the state, and has a membership of 47,030 persons comprising 1,500 local groups. The growth of the NDFU in membership can best be shown by figures based on the records of the organization.

It has been charged that many farmers are members of the NDFU "purely because they have happened to have patronized some Farmers Union cooperative." Membership in the organization and the resulting benefits thereof cannot be obtained merely by patronage of a FU cooperative. A person must make his livelihood or at least a large percentage of his income from farming, and must go through a regular application procedure in order to become a member of the Union.

Chart III shows a comparison of membership from 1926 through 1945. The data for honorary members (wives of dues-paying members) is incomplete, as is the information of Junior members, but, according to NDFU secretary, A. L. Hellebust, the dues-paying totals are accurate and complete.
Chart IV, which follows, shows a comparison of the density of NDFU membership as against the total number of farmers by counties for the period 1934 and of 1944. Secretary Hellebust reports that the density of NDFU locals also follows the same pattern.

Membership Cost in NDFU

Membership cost in the NDFU is far from excessive—only $4.00 a year, which is pro-rated by the NDFU as follows: 70¢ to the local union; $1.25 to the state organization, 45¢ to a cooperative center building fund; 50¢ for a subscription to the North Dakota Union Farmer, official publication of the NDFU; and the remaining 40¢ is the per-capita which goes to the national union.
CHART IV
NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION
PERCENTAGE ORGANIZED FARMERS - 1934

NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION
PERCENTAGE ORGANIZED FARMERS - 1944
The $1.25 to the state union is devoted chiefly to the educational program of the NDFU. In addition to the dues, the cooperatives pay an educational fund to the state organization, usually about 5 percent of their net earning. The value of the educational organization to the cooperative lies in its ceaseless work to develop understanding of cooperative activity. An educated membership means a healthy cooperative. 1

The NDFU is democratically controlled by delegates from locals at state conventions. These delegates write the program of activities for the state, and elect a state board to carry out the program.

The pro-rata of dues also is through action of the delegates, and there is a complete and open audit, with salaries of all executives and expenditures listed and printed once a year in the North Dakota Union Farmer, the official publication.

There exists in the minds of some people, confusion with the North Dakota Farmers Union, and the Non-Partisan League, a political organization operating in North Dakota. The latter group represents a farmer wing of the Republican party, and is not an activity operated by the NDFU. 2 Incidentally, the NDFU, as declared in its constitution,


2. Greater detail regarding the Non-Partisan League has purposely been omitted, as members of the NDFU and their officials deny that there is any tie-up between the organizations. While it may be true that in times past an interlocking directorship may have existed, and that possibly many NDFU members today are also members of the Non-Partisan League, yet so far as may be determined, there is no direct connection between the two organizations today.
is a "Non-political" organization. It endorses no candidates for political office. It does, however, support or oppose specific legislation. Chart II briefly lists some of its legislative activities. The legislative accomplishments of the NDFU also are cited in another part of this thesis.

State Headquarters

Activities of the NDFU are directed from Jamestown where the organization owns its own building, and where is housed the state offices, the insurance office, the publication office, an auditorium, kitchen, dining room, and dormitories for use by the membership. Post-war plans provide for additional construction on the state headquarters building.

The North Dakota Union Farmer, official organ of the NDFU; releases to daily and weekly newspapers; regular radio broadcasts and discussion groups; are used by the organization as means of acquainting members and other North Dakota citizens as to the progress being made, the goals aimed at by the organization, and as a media to educate not only NDFU members, but also others in better farming practices, and to promote the three-sided Farmers Union program.

Workers from State headquarters are constantly in the field to assist locals in carrying out the projects undertaken by them. Outstanding in this work is Mrs. Jerome Evanson, who directs the junior education program, and upon whom much of the continued successful existence of the NDFU depends. Helpful service to junior members, and the keeping alive of the Farmers Union spirit in them eventually will make towards an even stronger and better educated group—senior members with a strong NDFU training.
PART III

THE NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION

TRIANGLE IN ACTION
PART III

THE NORTH DAKOTA FARMERS UNION TRIANGLE IN ACTION

The Educational Phase

Educational activities of the NDFU, although informal, teach the farmer members the practical application of economics. It may, in a way, be compared to the present day vocational education classes in the public schools as it "educates by doing" and does for the farmer what trade or professional schools do for their students.

Each month, farmer members of more than 1,500 locals in 51 counties of North Dakota meet to consider their mutual problems, to discuss new methods of agriculture, to hear speakers who are trained to assist the farmer in business problems, and to enjoy recreation and fellowship.

Featured at all meetings are the songs of the Farmers Union, some of them new, but many of them selected from the old folk songs sung by peoples of the "old country" and brought to America a generation or two ago, when peasants of other nations flocked to these shores in the happy expectation of creating from the wilderness offered to them homes and farms which they could work and own, and which would be free from the menace of feudal regimes. Group singing often breaks down barriers which may have been created by petty disputes which developed into mountains from molehills due to lack of understanding. These are the songs, too, which are sung to little children as they nestle in their mother's arms, or as they are being tucked away for the night and a murmur of a mother's voice is needed to summon the power of sleep seeds.
Thousands of farm youths have had their first real insight into the wide possibilities offered them in agriculture through the NDFU educational program. They have been shown the greater potentialities of agriculture than is evident to them merely by doing chores or by "helping me or pa" on the farm. Local classes for Junior members, ages 16 to 21; Junior Reserves 13 to 16; and for Juveniles from 8 to 13; are sponsored by the NDFU, and courses in keeping with the age attainments of each group are offered to each class under the supervision of capable leaders. Over 2,000 farm youths and their leaders have attended summer camps since 1934, and from 1936 to date, nearly 500 young folks and adults have received a full month's training in cooperative enterprise and Farmers Union leadership at cooperative institutes. The youth educational program of the NDFU, in itself, offers a worthy subject for dissertation.

Each year county presidents, secretaries, and educational directors attend a week's conference, and similar sessions are held for the training of new leaders. These sessions are in addition to the special youth conferences.

Four field workers, the director of education, the editor of the official newspaper, as well as the president and secretary of the state Union, devote the majority of their time to the educational and organizational functions of the NDFU.

To properly describe the ramifications of the educational program of the Farmers Union would require thousands of words, as the educational factor of the Farmers Union is such a vital part of the other PU programs that a thorough dissertation would necessarily involve all of the Union activities
According to material made available from the NDFU state headquarters, the educational objectives of the NDFU are as follows:

"To teach the farm children of America the principles, ideals and philosophy of cooperation that they may be a more enlightened and happier class of society than their fathers have been.

"To educate the farmers of America so that they may fully understand the necessity of belonging to the Farmers Union, and thus, through organization, accomplish what they as individuals have failed to do.

"To create an interest in, and consciousness of, the social and economic forces at work in the world, against which rural people must pit their brains and energy and understanding.

"To preserve the family-type farm, the foundation stone of democracy, and the basis of true rural culture.

"To develop, through contacts with their neighbors, a sense of social responsibility among farmers toward one another and the rest of society.

"To build, through contacts and idealism of its educational program, a higher rural culture in America, in which our boys and girls may find a fuller, more abundant, and more satisfying life."1

1. Pamphlet issued by NDFU.
In concluding a report of the major aspects of the NDFU educational program and the basic fundamental of the Farmers Union triangle, the reader should bear in mind the methods used by the organization to educate its members. It is a basically local form of education with the purpose of making available what practically corresponds to a vocational course in agriculture. It is a form of advanced and streamlined education utilizing publications, radio, films, debates, and lectures at meetings of local units, training schools, conferences, and other factors previously cited. It not only educates the farmers in better agricultural production methods, but it also aims to teach its farmer members sound business practices, marketing principles, cropping methods, and all of the many ramifications involved from selection of ground for specialized crops, its treatment, and other phases through the sale of products.

The legislative and cooperative factors of the Farmers Union are but the fruition of the educational labors.

While it may be true that Education is the basis of the NDFU triangle according to the officers and written policy of that organization, yet it appears to be that all three sides of the triangle are so interlaced that the evidence of the educational factor may seem somewhat lost. That it operates effectively cannot be doubted, but it is only natural that any group benefiting from financial returns and legislative action will naturally listen to the teachings or react in such a way as to profit by the recommendations made to them. Undoubtedly, therefore, although the educational program, especially with the younger group, is
effective in itself, yet its success among the older members more than
likely is accepted primarily with the thought of greater personal
profits and security.

The Legislative Side

As in the case of Education, the Legislative phase of the Farmers
Union also merits complete and detailed study. Like the other two
sides of the Farmers Union "triangle" it must be but briefly explained
in this work. The legislative activities of the Union definitely are
designed towards economic betterment of farmers, which factor naturally
results in sociologic advantages. Careful and detailed study of farmers'
needs, or conclusions reached after a thorough educational phase has
developed information which shows need for legislative action always
proceeds legislative action by the Union.

Enactment of laws alone seldom solves all of the problems of a
people or of a special group, and even today, with the multiplicity of
laws dealing with agriculture, there are still many phases of agricul-
tural activity which either require new legislation of a protective
nature, or action which will remove certain phases of agriculture from
government regimentation.

This thesis does not, nor will it, express any opinion as to the
relative merits of existing laws dealing with farmer problems. The
Homestead Exemption Act, the Frazier-Lemke Bill, the Agricultural
Marketing Act, various provisions of the Farm Credit Administration,
Commodity Credit Corporation, War Food Administration, Farm Security
Administration, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, Soil Conservation program, either existing in their original form or as successor-organizations, and many other state and federal agencies have been established, presumably for the benefit of the farmer. It is needless to say that the majority of the laws passed and the agencies established were so created with the intent to help the farmer, and—hence the nation. Just how successful the achievement towards such an end has been is determinant upon an individual's attitude, profession, or, perhaps, his political viewpoint.

Since 1932, the North Dakota Farmers Union has actively supported or sponsored many state and federal laws aimed towards bettering the farmer, especially the "dirt" farmer, who, during the years of depression, drought, low yields, and low farm prices saw much of his land in the Dust Bowl denuded of its top-soil, but blanketed with mortgages. Recent years have seen a change in NDFU legislative policies as the North Dakota farm picture has been revitalized due to productive yields, higher prices brought about by a war-time economy, subsidies, and other factors.

NDFU Sponsored Legislation

Some of the legislative action actively sponsored by the North Dakota Farmers Union includes commodity loan programs, parity payment appropriations, the ever-normal granary, AAA benefits, crop insurance based on seeded acreage rather than harvested acreage, wheat crop insurance, credit for crop insurance premiums, and tenant purchase programs. It initiated laws outlawing crop mortgages and corporation farming in North Dakota, supported FSA in obtaining appropriations to assist submerged farm families to become self-sustaining efficient operators,
and forestalled repeal of the North Dakota law abolishing deficiency judgments and the anti-corporation farming act. Many other laws affecting the farmers have been actively sponsored or opposed by the NDFU.

As a sidelight to the legislative activities of the NDFU, its "march on the capitol" in 1940 offers an interesting bit of history. The North Dakota legislature, in 1940, had before it an amendment to a law passed in 1932 which outlawed corporation farming in the state. The original bill had been endorsed by the Union. The amendment before the 1940 legislature, however, would have nullified the law, and members of the Farmers Union stood ready for a mass protestation of the passage of the amendment should such passage become imminent.

Word from Bismarck, the capital, finally indicated that the amendment had sufficient backing for passage, and from all parts of the state Farmers Union members left their work and journeyed to the capital. More than 5,000 farmers arrived at Bismarck by train, bus, auto, and every other type of conveyance—all determined to voice their disapproval of the amendment. This they did in orderly fashion, and after consultation with their legislators, were allowed to testify against the proposed measure. It is claimed that for the first time in the history of the state the legislature adjourned and convened again in a large auditorium so that a hearing might be held with all of the farmers and legislators present. Following the hearing, the amendment was reported upon unfavorably.

1. Edwards, Gladys Talbott, Farmers Union Triangle, p. 142
As previously mentioned, the legislative activities of the NDFU and the Farmers Union national would require many pages were they to be recorded. Each page would clearly indicate that there has been a steadily increasing economic growth of producers as a result of the Union legislative policies—policies which have been determined by farmers who were enabled to see their need for protection or to seek advantages as a result of their eye-opening Farmers Union program.

Cooperative Phase

If one were to ask tourists who have ridden through North Dakota the question, "What is the Farmers Union?" there would be many different answers. Some would say, "An oil station," another might respond, "A grain elevator," and still another might answer with "A creamery or a hatchery." Many answers could be given based upon the brick and stone structure viewpoint, as the North Dakota Farmers Union does include oil companies, grain elevators, creameries, hatcheries, shipping offices, cold storage lockers, trucking associations, insurance offices, credit unions, turkey pools, lumber yards, grocery stores, general stores, and even a funeral parlor which purchases caskets made by a cooperative casket manufacturing company operated in Minnesota.

FUGTA Grain Terminal Association

In North Dakota alone there are 175 Farmers Union concerns affiliated with the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, the terminal marketing agency for Farmers Union cooperative grain elevators. The FUGTA, organized in 1937, has forced payment of premiums for high protein, corrected bad grading, weighing, docking practices, brought
down margins between local markets, and has assisted in obtaining better legislation for growers.

From the time it started in business in early 1938 with a capital of $30,000, its net worth today is well over $4,000,000. It is the largest cooperative grain marketing organization in the United States, marketing over 80 million bushels of grain yearly for approximately 300 affiliated Farmers Union Cooperative elevator associations in North and South Dakota, Montana, Iowa, and Minnesota. In 1943, with the purchase of the St. Anthony and Dakota Elevator Company line, it increased its service to over 450 elevators, 76 of which are operating in North Dakota.

**Livestock Marketing**

Cooperative livestock marketing through the Farmers Union Livestock Commission Company has provided farmers with funds to build their own organization and has given farmers representation on terminal markets where prices are set. Also through this cooperative action, grading and weighing practices have been improved. Fifty-four North Dakota Unions participate in this activity.

**Turkey Marketing**

Members of the North Dakota Farmers Union have marketed their turkeys for many years through the nine Farmers Union Turkey Marketing associations. In 1938, however, the Great Northern Turkey Cooperatives, Inc., was established to serve pools in North and South Dakota, Minnesota, eastern Montana, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Wyoming, and eastern Colorado. The GNTCI is a cooperative owned by its affiliated pools and is not a pool itself. It acts as a bargaining agency for the pools.
selling only federally graded birds. The North Dakota Farmers Union was the first cooperative organization to use federal grading of turkeys, and has carried on a concerted educational program to improve the quality of North Dakota turkeys.

**Trucking and Shipping**

The four federated cooperative trucking associations owned by the Farmers Union Oil companies and shipping associations have grown rapidly during the last few years. These truck lines generally haul livestock to the Farmers Union Livestock Commission Company at Fargo or South St. Paul, and return with loads of supplies from the Farmers Union Central Exchange for oil companies. They charge the rates fixed by the Interstate Commerce Commission, and yield large returns to the members.

**Creamery Cooperatives**

Of the 28 cooperative creameries operating in North Dakota, the majority were established during the years 1928-30, although the oldest, at Maddock, was organized in 1915. The establishment of the cooperative creameries has had a very definite effect in raising the price paid to farmers for butterfat, and has narrowed the margin in butterfat prices between the New York market and the local station.

The cooperative creameries of North Dakota have combined assets of over three-fourths of a million dollars with a net worth of over half a million dollars. Their combined paidup capital stock is well over $300,000, and the annual volume of business is nearly $3,000,000.
Poultry and Hatchery Plants

The Farmers Union Cooperative Association of Williston and Minot, organized in 1936, is but one of the MDFU organizations operating hatchery and poultry plants and handling feed and seeds. It represents, however, an outstanding venture in this field, and operates on standards set by the National Poultry Improvement Association, selling only U.S. Approved Fullorum and T.B. tested chicks.

Cooperative Grocery Stores

More than 13 cooperative grocery stores are operated by Farmers Union groups in North Dakota, and are aiding in the improvement of living standards by quality control through consumer ownership.

Cold Storage Plants

Until defense activities for World War II curtailed rapid expansion, one of the fastest growing cooperative industries in North Dakota was the establishment of cold storage locker plants. Relaxed restrictions by the War Production Board, however, has enabled establishment of additional plants during the past two years, and has permitted farmers to process and freeze their own meats and vegetables. In conjunction with the maintenance of the food lockers, butchering and slaughtering facilities are maintained by the majority of the cold storage cooperatives, charging their members a small charge per pound for butchering, cutting, sharp freezing, and wrapping of the meat.

The locker units in themselves do not yield large earnings for their members, and generally are operated in conjunction with existing cooperative groups. The chief value of the cold storage activity
lies in providing farm families with a better diet, enabling them to have fresh meat and vegetables available the year around. Some persons see in the cold storage plants the beginning of small packing plants like those in Denmark, and are of the belief that they eventually will provide competition for the large meat packing concerns.

Credit Unions

From the establishment of the first rural credit union in North Dakota at Valley City in December, 1938, until the present time when more than 118 such unions are operating, the growth of the credit union movement in Farmers Union groups have been such as to open the eyes of the farmers as well as bankers and business men. Farmers Union groups, through credit unions, are building pools of savings to provide for short-term small credit needs and cooperative action. Actually, these credit unions are miniature cooperative banks.¹

The Credit Union National Association, the central organization of Credit Unions in the United States, says,

"A cooperative credit union is a cooperative society organized under state or federal law (and the supervision of a state or federal department) within a specific group of people, for the two-fold purpose of supplying members of that group with a plan of systematic saving and making it possible thereby for them to take care of their own credit needs at a legitimate rate."²

¹. NDFU annual report, 1942.
². CUMA material supplied to NDFU.
In any event, it would seem that credit unions have been a constructive attempt made by farmers in the effort to avoid the high interest rates which have, in the past, been charged to them. It also assists in their education regarding the value of money, credit, and sound business practices. By saving cooperatively and collectively, even in small amounts, groups have been able to establish and maintain their own investment fields. As one member of a credit union said, "Members of our credit union save money so that we can loan it to ourselves."

**Cooperative Insurance**

Insurance is another activity in which the North Dakota Farmers Union has been active, and there are today 34 cooperative insurance unions in North Dakota. Establishment of the Farmers Union cooperative insurance program resulted from the realization that in many cases cost of insurance to the farmer was beyond their ability to pay. Lapse of thousands of policies issued to farmers occurred during the drouth and depression, and in 1937 the state board of the NDFU was asked by the delegates at the state convention to investigate the field of insurance and the advisability of the Farmers Union providing insurance services for its members.

After considerable investigation, arrangements were made by the NDFU to handle insurance through a national cooperative insurance company. Later, the Farmers Union Service Association was established in North Dakota, 51 per cent of the stock being owned by the NDFU. At the present time, life, automobile, and city fire insurance policies are being issued.
The NDFU does not write fire insurance on farm property, since adequate service at a minimum cost has, for a number of years, been provided by a plan originated by Moses Erickson, a North Dakotan, who instituted a plan of county group insurance for Farmers Union members.

**Cooperative Oil Stations**

Without doubt, one of the best known activities of the NDFU is its operation of the Farmers Union Oil companies. In 1943 there were more than 111 oil stations operated by Farmers Union cooperatives in North Dakota, supplying gas, oil, automotive, tractor and farm supplies of highest quality to thousands of farmer patron-owners. War restrictions on gasoline and tires reduced the number of operating stations to 86 in 1945, but with restrictions released, it is expected that the number of oil companies operated by NDFU members will reach a new high.

Since the establishment of the first FU oil station in Hazleton, North Dakota, as a branch of the Farmers Union Elevator Company of Hazleton, and then by the NDFU in Jamestown in 1928, to the present time, thousands of dollars have been saved annually, not only by members of the North Dakota Farmers Union cooperatives, but by all users of petroleum products.

The savings resulting from establishment of the Farmers Union oil cooperatives is not represented in money alone. The visible dividends were those earned by patrons of the stations in cash dividends, stock, and patron’s equity reserves, interest on shares, educational funds, surplus and reserves. The invisible dividends, however, represent many
dollars that never were spent because of lowered retail price of gasoline. Members of the Farmers Union oil cooperatives enjoyed both types of dividends, but they made available the second dividend to all gasoline consumers regardless of where petroleum products were purchased, as the outside oil companies soon were forced to bring their gasoline prices in line. Many attempts were made in the earlier days of the cooperative oil companies' existence to force the issue by price-cutting practices, legal action, and attempted legislation. Farmers Union oil company patrons, however, realized that if their cooperative purchase of gasoline were to be suspended, gasoline prices would again rise, and the independent oil companies would once again dominate the field. With this thought in mind, and following a strenuous educational program, the FU oil cooperatives battled it out against the independent companies. During this period FU members often paid more for gasoline pumped at their own stations than they would have paid for the same commodity purchased at pumps owned by independent stations. Success of the NDFU program is evidenced by their continued patronage of cooperative stations despite immediate advantages offered by price-cutting competition.

A detailed survey made by the NDFU shows that during just one 10-year period, 1928-1938, more than $2,000,000 was saved by patrons of the NDFU cooperative oil stations, an average of $26 for every farmer (not only FU members) in North Dakota. In addition, the retail margin of gasoline had been reduced from 3.3 cents in 1931 to about 3.5 cents at present. This reduction represents a savings of more than $45,000,000 to all gasoline consumers in the state. To the farmer-producer it meant something of even greater importance—liberation from paying excessive profits
to gasoline and oil dealers, as the previous prices often were prohibitive to farmers who needed such commodities in order to market their produce. It also demonstrated the effectiveness of the NDFU educational program.

**Williston, North Dakota**

Before closing the chapter on activities engaged in by the North Dakota Farmers Union with its clearly denoted economic development so evident, and with the educational and sociologic connotation running parallel to it, some mention should be made of the town of Williston. This North Dakota community has been called the "most cooperative town in North America." Again this thesis presents another topic which merits detailed study and consideration as a possible subject for sociologic research. The presentation of Williston herewith is brief, but it pictures the results of long and arduous cooperative activity based on careful research and brought about by a well-planned educational program.

Williston, county seat of Williams county in North Dakota (a county in which more than 80 per cent of the farmers are members of the NDFU) is located 19 miles east of the Montana line, and 63 miles south of the Canadian border. It is dominated by Farmers Union enterprises, eight of which, in 1940, did a business of more than a million and a quarter dollars.

In this town of 5,790 population, farmer members of the cooperatives affiliated with the North Dakota Farmers Union, own and operate a poultry and supply plant that houses the largest hatchery in North Dakota, a feed grinding plant and warehouse, a poultry and egg marketing room, and a

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cold storage locker; a sub-terminal elevator with concrete tanks holding half a million bushels of grain; a branch warehouse of the Farmers Union Central Exchange; an oil company housed in a building covering a quarter of a city block and handling in addition to gasoline and oil a complete repair shop and a complete line of farm hardware; a $50,000 lumber yard; a livestock shipping organization; a cooperative creamery which in 1942 churned more than two million pounds of butterfat and had net earnings of more than $84,000; a cooperative market (the largest store in town) housing a modern grocery super-market, meat department, clothing department, and a lunch counter.

Located in Williston is the office of the county credit union, and the MDFU insurance representative. Over the cooperative market, and on the second floor of the building, is the meeting hall where all Farmers Union sessions are held. Other Farmers Union cooperative activities in Williston include ownership and operation of a cooperative funeral home, and the publication of the Farmers Press, a weekly newspaper started before the Farmers Union was organized, but owned by farmers who are now Union members.

All of the cooperatives in Williston work together. When the store was small, it was located in a building owned by the oil cooperative and rented at a low monthly rate. The creamery advanced several thousand dollars to enable the oil cooperative to finance the purchase of the $50,000 lumber yard, and there have been many other examples of mutual assistance rendered each other by the various cooperative agencies.

There are some people who doubt the wisdom of a community being dominated by either independent organizations under one general control.
or by cooperative groups such as are found in Williston. These same people contend that domination by a single concern, or by cooperative groups, tend to undermine the small independent businesses in the community.

In referring to Williston in her book, Mrs. Edwards quotes the following item carried in a Williston newspaper (presumably the Farmers Press) in which the Williston cooperatives related their accomplishments for 1940: "...And in aiding themselves these cooperators are in turn aiding others about them. During 1940 Williston's eight cooperatives, the Farmers Union Cooperative Creamery, the Farmers Union Oil Company, the Farmers Union Cooperative Association, the Farmers Union Grain Terminal Association, the Farmers Union Livestock Shipping Association, the Williston Cooperative Credit Union, the Williston Cooperative Market, and the Farmers Union Central Exchange, have done an aggregate business of over $1,244,000. They have paid out to 142 part and full time employees salaries amounting to over $71,300; in dividends to stockholders living in the Williston trade territory, $50,560.07; and in taxes to Williams County over $5,000, to say nothing of the $3,500 in taxes paid to the state and federal governments.

"Jobs by the hundreds have been created locally to supply the demand for co-op merchandise and services, and savings of hundreds of thousands of dollars are being made yearly by cooperative-minded persons who buy these goods.

"And in addition to this, thousands of dollars are brought into this community by hundreds of people who are attracted to Williston by
by the Co-ops from distances often as great as three or four hundred miles, and who come not only to trade at the cooperatives but to take advantage of the selections and prices offered by Williston merchants.

Conclusion

Part Three has attempted to portray briefly the historical background "workings" of the North Dakota Farmers Union. Many, many pages instead of few could have been written as each and every phase of the organization, including the National Union, merits greater detailed presentation than rightfully could be included in the problem at hand. Elaboration of those factors, however, is not the prime purpose of this thesis, and for that reason, countless interesting details have been omitted.

The picture of the North Dakota Farmers Union as presented in this Part has been factual, but like so many pictures, different attitudes may be taken towards it because of the physical or mental perspective from which it is viewed.

The scene has been painted and many portions make up the central figure. But anyone who studies the picture may see deeper into the organization than is revealed by a mere outline of an oil station, a grain elevator—or even a funeral parlor.

1. Edwards, Gladys Talbott, The Farmers Union Triangle, p. 129
PART IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Identification and Implications
Studied out of the Practical Experience

To a sociologist, the foregoing material in this thesis is rich with sociological aspects and implications. To an economist, the material offers a different picture—the economic viewpoint, but to each of these, it is apparent that the North Dakota Farmers Union has satisfied, to a large extent, farmers' problems.

PART III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

As previously stated, farmers, at one time, were notoriously poor businesses men, and as a result, unfair advantages were taken of them. With the creation of the NDU in North Dakota, and following a long and hard struggle to get acceptance of its program, the farmers have developed knowledge, skill, and ability, not only in the area and type of production, but also in the area of marketing. Farmers began to realize the need for cooperation and legislation—cooperatives such as were utilized by bankers, associations, retail credit dealers, farm implement dealers, railroad lobbyists, and others allied with or working against agriculture.

The NDU also showed the farmer how he had been victimized and taught him how to prevent future victimization by application of better production and marketing methods.

The economic aspect of the North Dakota Farmers Union program is admitted. Evidence of the successful businesses created by these farmers includes an idea to the reader's mind as to the clearly evident successful economic status which surrounds the NDU structure.
PART IV
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Significance and Implications
Growing out of the Triangle Program

To a sociologist, the foregoing material in this thesis is rife with sociological aspects and implications. To an economist, the material offers a different picture—the economic viewpoint, but to each of them it is apparent that the North Dakota Farmers Union has satisfied, to a large extent, many of the farmers' problems.

As previously stated, farmers, at one time, were notoriously poor business men, and as a result, unfair advantages often were taken of them. With the creation of the NDFU in North Dakota, and following a long hard battle to get acceptance of its program, the farmers have developed in knowledge, skill, and ability, not only in the hows and whys of production, but also in the ways of marketing. Farmers began to realize the need for cooperation and legislation—cooperation such as was utilized by bankers associations, retail credit dealers, farm implement dealers, railroad lobbyists, and others allied with or working against agriculture.

The NDFU also showed the farmer how he had been victimized and taught him how to prevent future victimization by application of better production and marketing methods.

The economic aspect of the North Dakota Farmers Union program is admitted. Evidence of the enormous businesses created by Union members leaves no doubt in the reader's mind as to the clearly evident successful economic status which surrounds the NDFU structure.
But dig deeper—dig down to the basic reasons or the necessity for the creation of the Farmers Union or any other cooperative group. Somewhere, an individual needed help to preserve, say first of all, his family, the greatest of all sociological institutions. In order to do this, he sought ways and means of achieving that end and arrived at the conclusion that the cooperation with others not only would be his own salvation, but that it would be reciprocal.

The Weavers of Toad Lane were starving—they were unable to better their economic status as additional income was not to be had. There was no greater production of wealth possible for them, so they combined the sociological element of creating an institution with the economic principle relative to the use of such assets as they did possess. They emerged, as has done the Farmers Union, with an economic structure based upon sociological needs and foundation. From the very start of this old cooperative movement the process of applied social theory is evident, and the same process is applicable to the activities of the North Dakota Farmers Union.

Had it not been that the farmers of North Dakota were unable to purchase gasoline at prices set by petroleum monopolies, and if some individual had not had the idea of associating himself with others for the purpose of obtaining gasoline at prices which would permit profitable marketing of products, the existence of the NDFU might not have continued so successfully over the years.

Had it not been that the large grain elevators paid low prices for grain, and denied producers sufficient profit to support their families, schools, churches, and other activities, and had it not been for the fact that those same large grain elevators had refused to pay a differential
for high protein wheat, no one would have had the idea, which sprang, almost full grown, the establishment of what is now the world's largest grain marketing organization.

When one views the activities of the North Dakota Farmers Union presented in Part III, there is an implication that the NDFU is "business on a big scale." Today, that may be true, but were it not for the need of such a program and the constant plea for farmers to cooperate and to seek further knowledge in marketing practices, the North Dakota farmers today would not be recognised as outstanding members of a successful farmer movement.

When the petroleum industry sought to eliminate the Farmers Union oil companies by price-cutting, and the farmers could have purchased gasoline cheaper at "company owned or operated" stations, did the farmers purchase their gasoline at the lowest price? No, they were bound together by more than dollars and cents bonds, and they continued their cooperative action, eventually winning their battle. Again they proved that the lectures and debates held at meetings of their locals had taught them the economic fact that purchases at bargain rates do not always offer the greatest economy.

The Farmers Union triangle attempts to broaden the horizons of its members and enable them to join with their neighbors in seeking ways and means of solving mutual problems. Such action is sociological—both theoretic and empiric.

What is the effect of singing at local Farmers Union meetings? Songs arise from the hearts and throats of members who are gregarious and who find their sociological frame of mind stimulating and profitable by casting aside the economic blanket and cares of the day which shrouds most of the
daylight hours. Even as the NDFU song leaders teach harmonious singing to the members, so does the NDFU aim to teach its members in methods of harmonious living.

Glenn J. Talbott, president of the NDFU, and a man who has continued to work towards satisfying the needs of farm producers in the same effective manner as his illustrious father, declares that the success of his organization has been due largely to the work of the NDFU locals, and the vision of men composing those locals.

The State Union represents the educational bulletins on production and marketing, reports as to experiences of farmers and farm groups, suggestions for Local discussions, radio reports, the NDFU newspaper, and other material all designed to make NDFU members better informed. Well-trained and efficient personnel from the state headquarters devote their full time to educational and organizational needs of the NDFU.

Since 1936, over 400 young people and adults have received a full month's training at Cooperative institutes and summer camps. Each year, county presidents, county secretaries, and county educational directors attend a week-long training conference, and, since 1942, similar conferences to train new leaders for locals have been held. As previously mentioned, four field workers, the director of education, the editor of the North Dakota Union Farmer, as well as President Talbott and Secretary A. L. Hellebust, generally are on hand to direct the NDFU educational progress.

Although the NDFU primarily is interested in North Dakota, yet as a member of the National Farmers Union it constantly cooperates with the national and other state Unions in the effort to educate and better farmers everywhere.
Officers of the Local Unions are, in most cases, a president, a vice-president, a secretary-treasurer, a corresponding secretary, a junior leader, and a conductor. The office of chaplain formerly was an important one in the early days of the Union when grips and a password were a part of the ritual, but the trend is now toward education and publicity rather than ritualism. Upon the officers rest the duty of keeping the local alive and functioning, maintaining an adequate membership quote, and keeping the members educated and in contact with the State Union.

County officers consist of a board of directors, a president, a vice-president, a secretary-treasurer, and a junior leader. All of the county officers are a part of the educational organization, and as such, are responsible for the maintenance of that organization.

Referring to the importance of the Local, Gladys Talbott Edwards in her Farmers Union Triangle says, "The physical set-up of the Farmers Union is ideal for the building of a pattern of education. The Farmers Union Local provides a community mechanism which has been the most important element in the whole organization of the Union. In the Local, neighbor meets neighbor, problems are discussed, a program is presented, a lunch is served, and the social contact has done much to promote friendliness and good feeling. The Local offers a perfect mechanism through which is developed the pattern of junior education. The little country school house, the meeting place of farmers in the Local, has been an important factor in the whole Farmers Union program."¹

¹ Edwards, Gladys Talbott, Farmers Union Triangle, p. 85
A. L. Hellebust, secretary of the NDFU, referring to the marketing and cooperative buying activities of Farmer Union Locals, says, "We feel that a Farmers Union Local in the organization is fundamentally and basically responsible for any and all progress that has been made by farmers in the marketing and cooperative buying. History has shown that for successful institutions of this kind to be established it is basic that the local community groups—we call them Locals—be active and continue to be active and vitally concerned with operations of cooperatives. We are establishing many new cooperatives at the present time, and each of them is an outgrowth of discussion and study by Farmers Union locals in the vicinity. The activity always relates itself back to the farm organization."  

Mr. Hellebust's reference to the fact that establishment of new cooperatives was the outgrowth of discussions and study by NDFU locals is evidence that the program of the NDFU is designed to satisfy basic and collective needs.

Conclusion

Agriculture in North Dakota today is on its feet, and although World War II may be considered responsible for some of the strides made during the past year or two, yet without question, the farmers would have continued to make economic and social gains without the added impetus given them by the war.

North Dakota farmers no longer are faced with the critical situations which confronted them in the first quarter of this century. That the NDFU after eighteen years of existence is functioning at a high level in a state where other farmers movements declined, that its membership today is the greatest in its history, that its legislative program has succeeded in enactment of laws favorable to farmers, that its cooperative activities have eradicated the major problems of marketing and purchasing, and that its educational program, interlaced with the other two sides of the triangle, has raised the farmers' standard of living, all attest to the fact that this farmers movement has met the basic and collective needs of the farmers in North Dakota.

What has been done by the NDFU in North Dakota can be done, and no doubt is being done elsewhere by other farmers movements which are designed to meet the basic needs of its members.

The North Dakota Farmers Union, through its triangle, has enabled the farmers to correct their faulty production and marketing methods, it has shown them the wisdom and practicability of cooperation, and has satisfied their needs regarding transportation, grading, credit, and other business factors. It also has shown farmers and their families new ways of living which permit them to enjoy higher standards of living.

Many of the various activities of the NDFU merit a more detailed study for the purpose of elaboration of those factors. It is recommended to others who contemplate a thesis in the field of rural sociology or economics that they consider and investigate the fields of study which are to be found within the Farmers Union triangle.
In addition to showing how a farmers movement has met the basic and collective needs of farmers, and that the NDFU through its educational, cooperative, and legislative program has accomplished much for its members, this thesis, as a contribution to rural sociology, confirms the belief of the social science theory that farmers' problems can be solved if basic needs are satisfied.
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