The country life of the nation

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THE INSTITUTE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

THE COUNTRY LIFE

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CHAPEL HILL
THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA PRESS
1930
PREFACE

The Institute of Public Affairs was organized for the purpose of advancing the popular understanding of current public questions, economic, social, and political, through a study and discussion of those problems which are of immediate concern and interest to the American people.

From the beginning, a part of the program each year has been a round table on some phases of our country life problem because it has seemed to the Director and Board of Advisers that no question is more timely or so greatly in need of a satisfactory solution. Recent developments in the agricultural situation have only emphasized the predominant importance of the subject and the necessity for clear thinking and intelligent guidance in the formulation of a policy which will lead to an improvement in the present status of the farmer and provide a basis for a permanently prosperous agriculture.

Those persons who discussed the subject at the Third Session of the Institute were chosen because of their recognized leadership in the phase of the subject under consideration.

These discussions were of value to those who attended the round table meetings and those who read accounts of the meetings in the public press or obtained copies of individual addresses, but it was wisely suggested that because of the general excellence of the prepared papers, the proceedings merited publication in a more
permanent form and, therefore, it was decided to publish this volume. This was made possible through the cooperation of the University of North Carolina Press. The volume is sent forth in full confidence that it will make a real contribution toward the solution of one of the most urgent and difficult problems affecting our national welfare.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to those persons who contributed the papers which are included, to Dr. E. C. Branson, who assisted in preparing the program and directed the round table, and to Dr. Wilson Gee, who acted as secretary of the round table, and collected and edited the material herein presented.

CHAS. G. MAPHIS
Director of the Institute
INTRODUCTION

BY WILSON GEE

The farm industry of the United States has been ailing for the past decade or more. The other business interests of the nation, now passing through the inevitable slump in the business cycle, rather quickly recovered from the depression in the aftermath of the World War. Not so with the farming situation. While the status of agriculture has been somewhat improved in the past few years, the condition for the industry as a whole has been decidedly subnormal, accentuatedly so in recent months.

Various economists, agricultural leaders, farmers, politicians and others have in their own terms diagnosed the illness and prescribed widely different remedies. These range from the simple statement that farm relief is a matter of self-help on the part of the farmers to such complicated arrangements as the McNary-Haugen measure and the export debenture plan. The creation of a Federal Farm Board, and the giving to it of extensive powers and financial backing have created the hope that an able group of men may find ways successfully to meet a difficult and complicated situation. But the way this result is to be achieved has not yet been made clear.

The country life of this nation has always been a vital element in the greatness of our people. If the predictions of some of our closest students of population
are correct, this is likely to be even more true in the future than in the past. We are told so rapidly is the city birth rate declining that with the increasing death rate which occurs in a citizenship of older age levels, there will evolve a stabilized population in the urban centres a generation from now. Immigration quotas remaining as at present, the cities will more largely than ever before depend upon the country for their growth. Such conditions already are operating to diminish proportionately the increase of the domestic demand for the products of the farm. It is to be hoped that our vast agricultural resources will become in the future years much more important in an export trade with less-favored nations than ours in the matter of agricultural produce for food, clothing and the raw materials of industry.

The fundamental importance of the American farm life problem calls for the serious questioning and planning for its relief on the part of all of our thoughtful citizenship, both rural and urban. Is there a safe basis for a permanently prosperous agriculture? Why are some sections of the nation such large farm wealth producers but so poor in the retention of farm wealth? How must an industrial development be planned to benefit mutually in the largest measure both manufacturing and agriculture? Are the changes taking place in the rural family wholesome in their ultimate effects upon that basic institution in our national life? What should be done to give equality of educational opportunity as between the country and the city child? To what extent is coöperative enterprise a solution of