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An elusive balance: the small community in mass society, 1940-1960

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An elusive balance: The small community in mass society, 1940-1960

by

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A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: History

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Major Professor: Hamilton Cravens

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1996

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The movement for rural survival has the combined force of a great collection of institutions, agencies, and organizations. Some have been working since the back-to-the-farm espousals of bygone years. Others are very new." So wrote small community enthusiast Earle Hitch in 1950, in his compilation of community examples entitled Rebuilding Rural America. He described a definite reform movement which had scattered beginnings in the 1920s and 1930s, but took on a recognizable shape by the 1940s. More than a organization of professionals or writers, it appealed to and involved average people on the grass-roots level, although their numbers like those of the reformers, were small. By and large, their efforts went unreported by "mainstream" media, but their contributions to community improvement were real even though their influence often remained local. Most advocates of the small community placed it in a rural setting and viewed it as the antidote to the "disease" of an increasingly urban and industrial American society. They claimed that a way of life was being lost, and that this loss was part of a larger crisis of democracy. They believed that the balance of cultural life had been upset and tilted in favor of the large metropolis and the culture it supported. Hitch and the other small communitarians, like educator Baker Brownell, former TVA director Arthur Morgan, and decentralist Ralph Borsodi to name a few, repeatedly cited the urgency of the problem. For example, Hitch exclaimed, "The alarm needs to be rung. . . . The people at large have yet to learn how much their personal futures are concerned. The problems are not exclusively farmers' problems or country-town problems. They are national problems!"¹

People from many walks of life including agrarians, social scientists, educators, utopians, writers, government workers, and social critics of assorted doctrinal leanings contributed to the thought, literature, and discourse about the place of the small community in modern mass society. Their goal was not to necessarily foment a cultural revolution in order to bring down mass society, but to create a new role for the small town and its variations within mass society. By doing this, they hoped to influence the direction of mass society and ameliorate what they believed were its shortcomings. They carved out a small, but visible cultural place in opposition to the forces of centralization, corporatism, specialization, and urbanization. This is the story of the discourse surrounding the concept and doctrine of the small community in the years between 1940 and 1960, and the personalities who gave life to the small community cause.

Communities and their significance to American culture have been at the heart of the American experience since the time of the Puritans, if not before. Not only has the community as group been celebrated, but without an institutionalized aristocracy and rigid class system, so also did the individual assume greater importance early on in American society. In a manner of speaking, America can thus be viewed as an uniquely created "battleground" designed for a "tug of war" between the pull of the collective and the soaring aspirations for freedom of the individual. That explains in part why historians can honestly differ as to the relative role of the group and the individual in American historical development. For example, historian Page Smith identified the centrality of the small town from colonial times onward, and in particular, the covenanted community typical of Puritan settlement. "Colonization by congregations and kinship groups, fiercely exclusive in many instances, refutes the argument that the pioneers were champions of 'individualism.'" Yet, historian of literature R. W. B. Lewis focused on the powerful myth of the "American Adam," the ingenious, strong, determined, and resilient individual who met reality on its own terms without the constraining cultural baggage of an ossified European society. Both forces

existed in American history, and perhaps, had to if America were to fulfill its material, physical, national, and democratic destinies as many nineteenth-century pundits proclaimed. "The American myth saw life and history as just beginning. It described the world as starting up again under fresh initiative, in a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World."²

By the middle of the nineteenth century, American had found a workable and stable cultural synthesis (exclusive of the slavery problem), a balance between individual and group, between the locale and the national territory. That society was full of compromises and contradictions: boosters backed an ever-expanding commercial society, while stand-patters emphasized the virtues of traditional close-knit communities; extreme prejudice and bigotry mingled with tolerance and pluralism; gossip and conformity dominated the towns and cities, as a surly irreverence and cynicism for authority continued from colonial times; and the cult of the immediately practical and useful was celebrated from coast to coast, while reason and education were just as valued when people took time to reflect on those ideals in which they really believed. Americans filled their society with a variety of settlements: open-country neighborhoods, hamlets, villages, towns, and small cities, and they all tended to fulfill those functions of which we usually think when we talk about the small town. They honored the agrarian nature of society, engaged in self-promotion, manifested neighborliness and social equality, promoted industry, self-denial, and frugality, demonstrated an ambivalence toward wealth and property, but most of all, provided a symbol of home, hearth, security, and stability, if not always that actual experience. Rightly or wrongly, most Americans perceived the small town as the source of their democratic ideals and future citizens. Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy of the transcendent individual was watered down and ultimately rejected by the literati and civic leaders. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and others pointed to the "hopeless insufficiency of the isolated individual" and

urged the adoption of variants of community. The small community historically had come to constitute the basis of American society.³

But by 1890, the small town world underwent assaults from the forces of industrialization, urbanization, new waves of unfamiliar immigration, secularization, and increasingly bloody confrontations between labor and capital. The rise of big business, national markets, and mechanized factory work and its attendant elimination of craft workers disrupted the slower pace of the small town and its belief system. As noted by historian R. Jackson Wilson, "There was an urgent demand for concepts of man that gave him protective membership in a social community that stood as a buffer between the individual and the harsh uncertainties of both the evolutionary and the industrial world." Never quite as isolated as Robert Wiebe's concept of "island communities," towns and small cities found themselves drawn into the competition and yearning for the devices of an urban-industrial society, thus losing some of their autonomy and self-reliance in the process. The small town even got caught up in the effort by liberal critics, who dominated the literary scene between 1890 and 1940, to eliminate remnants of the genteel tradition which they saw as nothing more than Victorian prudery and hypocrisy. Novelists and social critics began to attack those very characteristics of the small place which had been its strength and had provided cultural continuity for several generations of Americans.⁴

The answer to the cultural crisis posed by the developing industrial system was not the alternatives posed by Populists such as Ignatius Donnelly, socialists, or even utopians like Edward Bellamy, but the eventual dominance of the progressive synthesis. Historian David Noble and others see it as the solution to the cultural predicament experienced by middle-class Americans by the 1890s. But the doctrines of planning, efficient organization, and use of expertise promulgated by progressives seemed ironically to destroy community, by undermining face-to-face relationships and the recourse to local and traditional social remedies. Most historians of the community and the progressive solution believe the

progressives largely failed to solve the dilemma of sometimes mutually exclusive hopes for continued cultural simplicity and stability of place in the face of demands for the limitless fruits of industrial progress. Progressives tended to retain individual freedom at the cost of community, so that their ideal community was really no community at all, because they made no compromise of the individual to the group. They tried to deal with the uniform physical system of the emerging mass society, but could not match it in needed psychic and moral unity. Historian Jean Quandt argued that "These intellectuals put great store by the right kind of communication; the key to the Great Community seemed to lie in the knowledge and sympathy created by face-to-face exchange and in the extraordinary scope given to these forces of solidarity by the new communications media. But this focus left the social structure untouched insofar as it assumed the continued hegemony of a market economy." Journalist William Allen White, urban reformer Frederic Howe, Hull House founder Jane Addams, political theorist and civic reformer Mary Parker Follett, philosophers John Dewey and Josiah Royce, and sociologists Franklin Giddings, Charles Horton Cooley, and Robert Park, to name a few, all wanted a new cooperative social order ameliorating the excesses of the industrial system, but retaining much of the desirable characteristics of the older small town order. But as historians Paul Goodman and Frank Otto Gatell observed, "Two decades of 'reform' left unsolved the problems of humanizing an industrial society, and the disillusioning experience of the First World War left the United States and the rest of the world less safe than ever for democracy."⁵

All was not lost though since the progressives had defeated Social Darwinism as advocated by Herbert Spencer and his American proponent, William Graham Sumner. But what had they won? Most scholars on the community believe that the progressives did not gain much for the small community because they did little to slow down the development of a mass society based on increasingly large organizations and secularization brought about in part by science and the rise of the social sciences. David Noble even claimed that: "From

1919 on, theories of revitalization in America and Europe would pass into the hands of radicals on the right or on the left as the American and European middle class tried to return to normalcy through nostalgia for a nineteenth-century paradise; a contrived and cultivated nostalgia which must deny that this class had faced any identity crisis in the gay nineties." The decline of progressivism certainly opened the cultural debating door to a variety of new positions, and combined with the further development of mass society, unleashed a plethora of threats to the old social order which stimulated reactionary backlashes against progressivism and modernism. By the 1920s a host of groups protested the relativism, naturalism, and scientific positivism exhibited by modernism by attacking radicals, Communists, and anarchists; expressing fear of immigrants, blacks, Catholics, and Jews; lamenting the weakening of religious authority; and opposing the use of alcohol and "loose" lifestyles. In addition, they continued to fear the impact of science and big cities. Much of this reaction came from small towns themselves, as shown by the Ku Klux Klan for example, as much of their strength emanated from rural areas, towns, and small cities. Thus the small town and its defenders lashed out at a rapidly encroaching mass society in twenties and thirties. No longer were they simply having trouble competing and staying even with growing metropolitan areas as in the previous twenty year period; now, small town advocates actively strove to stop the slide to a minority cultural status of the rural-based small community.⁶

Although no specific reform movement centered on the small community as the alternative to mass society in the twenties and thirties, many individuals and groups spoke directly or indirectly toward its defense. In this respect, they can be considered as precursors to the communitarians reformers of the forties and fifties. Groups, individuals, and social phenomena as widely divergent as the Southern Agrarians, decentralists and distributists, Lewis Mumford and regional planners, backers of the Tennessee Valley Authority, proponents of garden cities, new towns, and greenbelt towns, advocates of subsistence

homesteads, Henry Ford's village industries, Catholic and Protestant ruralists, and the amorphous back-to-the-land movement all vigorously promoted genuine alternatives to the developing mass society. As an interlocking system of financial, manufacturing, distribution, research and development, governmental, educational, and communications bureaucracies organized on a national scale and scope, many in corporate form managing the jobs and it was claimed by critics, the lives of millions of employees, the new mass society was driven by national advertising, consumerism, and a developing national transportation system to standardize, regulate, and set social tastes for the masses. The growth of megalopolises seemed to confirm that the new system favored urban and suburban ways of life over rural and small town places. Critics raged at the social results of a mass culture which they claimed included the creation of artificial wants, crowding and congestion, increased crime and juvenile delinquency, a drive to get ahead of one's neighbor, overspecialization, anxiety and a lack of security and stability, and dozens of other disadvantages. The greatest critique of mass society centered around the depersonalization of relationships and the reduction in importance of the individual within the community. The de-emphasis of the locale cut one of the crucial lifelines to the welfare of people in general, and forced them to look elsewhere for psychic and emotional support systems, if they could be found at all.⁷

Critics of mass society repeatedly focused on the alteration in the balance between the locale and the larger territory. Admittedly, times had changed, and most people no longer believed that the small town was sacrosanct; but many felt that the transformation had been too fast and had gone too far toward a national focus. Left in its wake were local and regional loyalties, sentiments, and cultural bonds which seemed insignificant, provincial, and even a little foolish given the national- and world-class celebrities, personalities, products, sensations, fads, and financial clout institutions of the mass society could easily generate on an annual basis. Visions of rural America withering on the vine due to the endless extraction of its money and brightest people by the larger society frightened and shocked a large part of

the generation which came of age in the twenties and thirties. The stock market crash, Depression, Dust Bowl, the rise of overseas dictators, and other natural and human-made calamities all focused attention on the immense transformation of American society in the short span of thirty or forty years from a small-town, agricultural society to an urban, industrial culture structured in the form of a mass society. This was a new social phenomenon, unfaced by previous generations, and its appearance generated its share of anxiety, malaise, and finger pointing. By the thirties, many intellectuals were willing to admit that this new system had failed, and openly discussed breaking with the doctrines of free market capitalism. Some of the best known public intellectuals of the age like Lewis Mumford, John Dewey, Robert Lynd, and Reinhold Niebuhr called for radical cultural change in response to the rise of mass society. They all wanted to redefine, not give up on the American Dream; but in the face of mass society which concentrated power and authority in large units (economic, financial, and governmental), and rendered individual freedom questionable in a social structure dominated by corporate giants, their calls for comprehensive planning combined with practical, egalitarian decision-making and experimentation at all levels lower than the national failed to halt the "drift" of a culture which refused to be "mastered." They continued to emphasize a type of communitarianism which recognized the necessity of any society to retain strong basic units of social organization, such as the family, neighborhood, spiritual centers, and so on. Mass societies needed these elements perhaps even more than traditional societies, because the former acted inherently to vitiate both the attractiveness and the legitimacy of these cultural-core building blocks. These public figures did not break completely with the evolving ideology of liberalism, accepting some key liberal tenets: that people made society and history; that human intelligence and reason were equal to the task; that individual freedom and self-expression were beliefs of the highest order; that democratic tradition was intact, but needed

to be extended to all people; and that social action by government could be beneficial to the general populace; and that the best place to test social plans was in actual practice.

The social critics in this study took the threat posed by mass society as seriously as the aforementioned public intellectuals, and by and large shared most of their liberal beliefs; but the small communitarians took the concept of the community, attached the qualifier of "small," took it literally, and in the process, made it the central part of their ideology. They generally hued to the rural side of the social equation, having little appreciation of anything urban. As a loose reform movement in the forties and fifties, small communitarians called for the decentralization of most industry and distribution of real property to the landless on a regional and local basis. This would be accomplished by social planning which would minimize unnecessary intrusion into peoples' lives by preserving and strengthening the natural ties between town and country and by eliciting participation in cooperative enterprises and social organizations. The whole communitarian program rested on a base of direct democracy which would re-empower them to make meaningful choices leading to decisions with fundamental effects on their lives. They believed that mass society had enticed, coerced, and even stolen vitally important rights from the people, without any intention of giving them back. In short, small communitarians proclaimed that the size of human settlements mattered, and that mass society with its huge urban agglomerations would eventually lead to a decadent, decayed civilization; only the small community with its emphasis on immediate, face-to-face, personal relationships connected to a geographic place or region offered the means to health, security, happiness, and the freedom which emerged from the practice of direct democracy. Not technophobes or anti-modernists, small communitarians judiciously selected what they believed worked and did not work from the array of doctrines, plans, and actions which coalesced during and after World War II into the dominant cultural paradigm of the consumer, welfare, corporate-managerial state. They did not oppose this development so much as the nature of the society from which it sprang--the

mass society, which in their view put exorbitant profits before pleasure, competition before cooperation, war before peace, specialization before understanding, and consumerism before home, family, religion, and the place where one lived.

This study looks at a variety of small communitarians and their often utopian proposals to counteract the ascendant mass society in an attempt to understand why and what they criticized and how well their ideas worked out in practice. Ecologically-minded regionalists took over a portion of the message of the literary regionalists of the thirties and applied it to regions of America which had been bypassed by progress or injured by the workings of the mass society. Social scientists from many disciplines played a role in studying and assessing the potential for the survival of the small town. Utopian small communitarians like Ralph Borsodi, Arthur Morgan, and Baker Brownell extolled their perfectionist dogma, knowing full well that the best they could hope for was to stem the tide of small community marginalization. Some agrarians like Louis Bromfield expressed communitarian ideas in an effort to update the stable, diversified rural culture of traditional rural America. Some professionals developed individualistic solutions to the plight of the small community such as Lewis Mumford and writer Granville Hicks. Above all else, these small communitarians sought not to reject modern mass society completely and utterly, but to cut it down to a scale which would allow the locale to attain a genuine cultural balance with the larger territory in which each part could participate in the whole on an equal footing. They believed that the small community constituted the ideal vehicle by which to accomplish this transformation.

NOTES

1. Earle Hitch, Rebuilding Rural America (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 258, 260.
2. Page Smith, As a City Upon a Hill: The Town in American History (New York: Knopf, 1966), 44; R. W. B. Lewis, The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 1-10, 5.
3. See Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954), for characteristics of small town America especially the concept of the "cult of the immediately practical and useful;" R. Jackson Wilson, In Quest of Community: Social Philosophy in the United States, 1860-1920 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1968), 30.
4. Wilson, 30; Smith, 220-258; Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).
5. David W. Noble, The Progressive Mind, 1890-1917 (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970), viii-x, 15; Jean B. Quandt, From the Small Town to the Great Community: The Social Thought of Progressive Intellectuals (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 158; Paul Goodman and Frank Otto Gatell, America in the Twenties: The Beginnings of Contemporary America (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), 55.
6. Noble, x; John Patrick Diggins, The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace, 1941-1960 (New York: W. W. Norton, 1988), 257-258; Goodman and Gatell, 111-146.
7. For treatments of the mass society debate see Diggins, The Proud Decades, Barry D. Karl, The Uneasy State: The United States from 1915 to 1945 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), Robert L. Dorman, Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), and William S. Graebner, The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne, 1991).

CHAPTER 2

THE SMALL COMMUNITY IN THE 1920S AND 1930S

By the late 1920s and early 1930s, a moderate, sensible, bloodless revolution which Americans might find enticing was at hand; not the violent struggle envisioned by communists, fascists, or anarchists, but the conception of societal transformation promulgated by a small, loosely-knit group denoted by either of the terms "distributist" or "decentralist." In 1936, Herbert Agar spoke for these peaceful revolutionaries: "Believing as we do that there are moral and economic virtues in the institution of widespread property, and that monopoly capitalism is morally ugly as well as economically unsound, our practical proposals look toward the establishment of a genuine property State--that is, a State in which a considerable majority of the families participate in real ownership." This vision stood in stark contrast to the business philosophy of the 1920s reflected in the policies of Calvin Coolidge and Andrew Mellon, the financial workings of the stock market, speculation manias, materialism, and elitist consumerism. The Depression certainly called those beliefs and practices into some question, but critics like Agar saw that the framework of the urban-industrial, capitalist state remained intact, and so he and others brashly called for a wholesale return to the supposed egalitarian property ownership of a earlier time, if not to its corresponding material and physical conditions. They saw that American society had been made over in the image of an industrialized, centralized, urbanized mass culture where greater extremes of wealth, power, and sheer numbers of people required new restraints on individual autonomy. This state of affairs not only threatened the time-honored American individualism, but after 1929 especially, the economic security of an entire people.¹

Simultaneously, a host of would-be reformers, many of whom now believed that a substantially altered or even a completely different social order was necessary to sustain and strengthen American democracy and society, rose up to do battle with the increasingly dominant urban-industrial order which they believed had betrayed the American Dream. The Great Depression helped galvanize the production of multifarious schemes and plans for relief, recovery, and reform. Some of these proposals reduced the cultural predicament to finding the most perfectly opposite form of social life to that of the mass society. The champions of these plans then eagerly pointed to their found solution: the health and well-being of the small community, an institution no longer at the center of the American ideological mix, but one with which most people identified strongly. It traditionally had been the basis of American life as part of a largely rural, agricultural existence. A plethora of individuals and groups representing different approaches to the problem of mass society embraced not only the traditional credos of agrarianism, small-town localism, and frontier mutual aid, but began to combine those with the more recent concepts of planning, regionalism, and decentralization of government, banking, and industry. Such groups as the Southern Agrarians, Mumfordian regionalists, distributists, TVA enthusiasts, advocates of greenbelt towns, subsistence homesteads proponents, followers of Henry Ford's village industries, Catholic ruralists, and practitioners of the back-to-the-land philosophy all began to move in the twenties and thirties toward a position which laid a basis for the later "celebration" of the small community as the pivotal institution in America's future safety and success.

One of the sustaining elements of the American cultural creed has been agrarianism. Inherited from the French physiocrats, over the centuries it acquired almost spiritual qualities as interpreted by advocates such as Hector Crevecoeur, Thomas Jefferson, John Taylor, Horace Greeley, the Grangers, and a myriad of populist backers. To a predominantly agricultural nation, agrarianism was not only a sensible and romantic ideal, it was even

idolized by many people in all walks of life. Businessmen were honored by and even sought out the appellation of farmer. To most observers, agrarianism meant that agriculture was the primary national producer of wealth; therefore, the farmer was the fundamental source of strength for the country. Also, farming was seen as a way of life superior to other occupations, productive of virtue and good character. Finally, agrarians believed that the best way to avoid social degeneration was to perpetuate the class of small land-owning farmers. By the 1920s, however, structural changes in American society caused by industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and new business and consumer practices continued the transformation of agriculture and affected the ideology of agrarianism itself. It suffered a loss of sentimentality, but the main change was a diminution in moral superiority and power. People could no longer insouciantly point to the presumed advantages of rural life, especially when the Country Life Commission had shown it to be severely lacking in many of the things taken for granted by urbanites. More and more, agrarianism was secularized into a largely economic creed.²

Despite the traditional tension in American history between town and country, agrarianism had always acknowledged at least by implication, the overlap and interpenetration of rural communities and their concomitant small-town-based communities. Even though cultural pundit Thorstein Veblen had all farmers warily eyeing the actions and prices of town merchants, both parties generally agreed to get along with each other, mainly because they had no real choice in the matter. Although rural and small-town communities were generally not losing population at this time, they were losing the battle of image and perception. Novelists and other opinion makers hammered at the revered, but often quaint myths of small town life. By 1920, when critic Carl Van Doren coined the phrase "revolt from the village," the cultural phenomenon he described had been under way for at least a decade. He caustically critiqued the nostalgic and romantic portrayals of small town togetherness and rural warmth and charm. Edgar Lee Master's Spoon River Anthology

(1915), Sherwood Anderson's Winesburg, Ohio (1919), and Sinclair Lewis' Main Street (1920) and Babbitt (1922) excoriated and condemned the small town and the village myth. Small towns had become culturally more like cities, voluntarily or involuntarily as shown in the Lynd's Middletown (1929).³

Even a region of the country like the South which tended to move, in general, at the slower pace of the small town, was not immune from the forces of modern change. At this point a new group of thinkers laid claim to the agrarian ideal. A movement of southern agrarians, led by a group of twelve dubbed the Nashville Agrarians, took the lead early in the decade of the Great Depression to redefine agrarianism to fit in a meaningful way the critical times. With the publication of I'll Take My Stand (1930), they promulgated a radical, conservative critique of modern society, and they hoped to have created a new, more sophisticated, more modern agrarianism to appeal to a wider audience. Four poets with ties to Vanderbilt University in Nashville led the Agrarians: John Crowe Ransom, Donald Davidson, Allen Tate, and Robert Penn Warren. In addition to this core, the group included psychologist Lyle Lanier, populist political scientist Herman Clarence Nixon, historian and farmer Frank Owsley, biographer and essayist John Donald Wade, playwright Andrew Lytle, drama critic Stark Young, poet John Gould Fletcher, and journalist Henry Blue Kline. Collectively they began to construct a distinctly southern response to the industrial mass society which seemed to upset the balance between locale and territory and devour the small community as part of its normal evolutionary growth. Simply put, the Nashville Agrarian's message was contained in Ransom's phrase "Agrarian versus Industrial." More appropriately, they stood against the dominant cultural paradigm of their times. Although not necessarily anti-modern, they certainly rejected the mass urban-industrial society with its technocratic and consumerist orientation. Out of their rebellion and disillusionment in the 1920s, they began collectively to consider helping the South stand its ground. By 1926 they did that by first turning their attention to the critique of what they saw as the stagnant, sentimental old

view of the South. In its place, they brought forward an image of the South as a society that they believed should have existed, but one on which southerners had turned their backs. Their main idea was that life was more than economic gain, and the pre-industrial South exemplified that kind of social order. According to the Agrarians, human beings had turned whole-heartedly to the new god of Progress, and this had stymied the realization of a utopian, legendary South of harmony and balance based on an idealized quasi-Medieval model.⁴

Taking to heart the thinking of T. S. Eliot, who viewed modern society as a wasteland in desperate need of a past, the agrarians accepted the need for a tradition that existed in a particular time and place to replace the lack of faith and connection with nature in modern society. Agrarianism was an indigenous tradition, and as an antidote to the cultural instability created by industrial society, they opted for an improved version of the Old South where people would have moral identities because their heritage of a life close to the soil would not be overlooked or ignored. The Twelve Southerners' agrarian roots were evident in Andrew Lytle's statement, "The farm is not a place to grow wealthy; it is a place to grow corn."⁵

One of the reasons suggested for the emergence of this creative agrarian collective was the challenge of a rival southern school and schools of thought, one of which was represented by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and its modernists, regionalists, and neo-humanists like Howard Odum. Odum represented the "New South" with its emphasis on efficient new industry and agriculture, high finance, and willing involvement (to a point) with the federal government if it meant material and economic progress. Another challenge to the Agrarians was the ideas put forward by Edwin Mims in his book Advancing South, which advocated liberalism and industrialism following the northern model. The Agrarians also opposed the technocracy movement and the society so advocated as being headed by "super-engineers," and represented as "Boards of Control." As

participants in the industrial system, communists, too, were anathema to the Agrarians. Many critics labeled the Nashville Agrarians as reactionaries and even fascists for their criticism of the New Deal. On the contrary, they believed that their brand of agrarianism offered a crucially needed alternative between communism and fascism. Indeed, most of the Southern Agrarians approved of most aspects of the Tennessee Valley Authority and criticized the New Deal for not moving fast enough to help small property owners and to reduce the clout of big businesses and the lending community.⁶

For the Agrarians, the urban-industrial cultural complex represented a total assault on human sensibilities and consciousness. In place of agrarian traditions, modern society had promoted consumerism, but that had proved to be a dead end. People had lost their sense of cultural place because their jobs, homes, schools, and families had been cut adrift from the community, each other, and the larger culture. The agrarians also argued, in a style reminiscent of Thorstein Veblen's instinct of workmanship, that industrial society was destructive of pride in workmanship and destabilized society by reducing labor needed to make products. Then, the system reabsorbed that unemployed labor into a new industries which marketed a new commodity that the public was compelled to buy to keep the cultural machine going. Ransom used the term "embarrassed" to describe laborers and how they felt being manipulated as mere consumer cogs in the larger market machine. Of real importance was not this false, artificial society created by applied scientific and marketing "genius," but the dignity and happiness of the individual, one who was only responsible for one's welfare and that of one's neighbors. Lyle Lanier maintained that "Undoubtedly the control of the great corporations must pass out of private hands if the present managers cannot be induced to operate them with greater regard for the public welfare."⁷

If the menacing culture of industrial society was not pitted against the traditional society, agrarianism would rise naturally to a place of preeminence, so the Nashville Agrarians believed. They were not very clear, however, on what specific means of reform

might bring about this change. Of all the Agrarians, Herman Clarence Nixon's essays on the southern economy tended to be the most practical statements of reform. His accounts devalued commercialism, and instead advocated a steady balance, which today we might call a steady-state economy. Not only was growth bad, it was unnecessary. More important than growth was the reprioritizing of the scale of production down from large industrial plants and companies to a greater emphasis on small and medium farms and general production facilities. The clock could not be turned back completely, nor did the Agrarians want it so, but the South had to stop its industrial expansion, or it would destroy the heritage that remained. They essentially called for an "economy and society organized on a human scale, one that permitted more individual, family, and community control over personal and social destinies that did the centralized industrial state, and one that reflected more concern with spiritual and humane values than was fostered by the scientific-technocratic-industrial mode of existence."⁸

Herman Clarence Nixon was most concerned with subsistence farming, his model of agrarianism. The mad scramble for money was one of the main evils he and the other agrarians observed in American society, so the obvious solution was to pull as far as possible out of the cash nexus. To this end, farmers would be aided by lower land taxes and higher subsidies. In addition, the government would dissuade farmers from becoming rural capitalists. A later agrarian, economist Troy Cauley took this reasoning one step farther by arguing that scarcity (money needs) would end if people simply reduced their material desires. "Genuine rural communities are not afflicted by that most efficient creator of scarcity of all time, modern advertising." Ransom believed that the South was still in a good position from which to make the transformation to a largely agrarian society. He saw the existence of many provincial communities as evidence of a basis to hold out against encroachment by forces of modernity. One of these greatest assets was the southern tradition of leisure, with a relaxed posture even in labor being required for the highest cultural

attainments. But it was left to venues other than I'll Take My Stand to spell out specific agrarian reformist proposals, such as Allen Tate and Frank Owsley did with their conception of a series of regional governments which would tailor rules and programs to needs of their particular areas.⁹

Just what was agrarianism, then, to the Twelve Southerners? Although Ransom did not think it needed definition, he offered the following: "Technically, perhaps, an agrarian society is one in which agriculture is the leading vocation, whether for wealth, for pleasure, or for prestige--a form of labor that is pursued with intelligence and leisure, and that becomes the model to which the other forms approach as well as they may. . . . The theory of agrarianism is that the culture of the soil is the best and most sensitive of vocations, and that therefore it should have the economic preference and enlist the maximum number of workers." Ransom also wondered how the little agrarian community could stand against the "Chamber of Commerce of its county seat, which is always trying to import some foreign industry that cannot be assimilated to the life-pattern of the community?" He concluded that if a community is weighted down by oppression, it must find a way to throw off the yoke of tyranny; it must not shrink from its task. "[Southerners] must seek alliances with sympathetic communities everywhere." Thus, I'll Take My Stand provided a stimulus and an invocation to solidarity, reform, and protest in the tradition of the small community.¹⁰

The Southern Agrarians posited that the health of the American Dream depended on widespread participation in agriculture as the fundamental economic concern. The nature of community would then be irreconcilably linked to the agrarian nature of the larger society. It would therefore be roughly equivalent to the agriculturally-based village or small town of the past, and would ideally approximate the slow-paced, smaller scale society of the nineteenth-century South. But while other anti-establishment groups found generic agrarianism to their liking, most did not share the somewhat reactionary, paternalistic, and simplistic perspective offered by the Nashville Agrarians. Allied anti-establishmentarians accepted the need to

resist what they saw as the encroachments of institutions of mass control and authority emanating from the centralized government, industrial corporations, and financial networks, but without the heavy reliance on agrarian philosophy. Those critics of mass society who advocated the widespread ownership of property, coupled with the breakup of concentrations of power in all the basic areas of society were called distributists or decentralists, depending on their relative emphasis of the former or latter conditions. Large-scale industrialization was anathema to both groups, although most supported the Tennessee Valley Authority because it was regional in character, and therefore more accountable to the people in theory. In addition, they both sought a renaissance of older agrarian virtues and a simpler economy, although not those of Southern society. Leading distributist Herbert Agar took this position to its logical extreme in The Peoples' Choice (1933) where he proposed that America return to the ordered, conscientious, and intelligent agrarian democracy of the time of John Quincy Adams with its economy based on widespread ownership of property and simple capitalism. These ideas were heavily influenced by the English Catholic philosophers Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton. Belloc's concept of the "servile state" emphasized the oppressive qualities of the collective state, while calling for the widespread distribution of property to the people who would base their social organization on the family unit, guilds, and the church. Agar proceeded to merge distributist thought with American agrarianism, and thereby he produced a fairly original doctrine of decentralism.¹¹

The Southern Agrarians, especially Alan Tate, noticed Agar because of his doctrinal innovation in the mid-1930s. Tate accepted Agar's proposal to edit a book which would address more than just the agrarian question and do that from a national perspective, not a southern, regional view. Their effort was published in 1936, as Who Owns America?, and it definitively set out the basic philosophy of distributist decentralism. It immediately took aim at American capitalism for the cavalier way in which it treated its workers and the atmosphere of insecurity and instability it created in society. This was a natural and

somewhat facile criticism considering that the Depression was in many ways caused by the failure of the business system. Finance capitalism had placed barriers between people, made for inequality and dependency among workers, and had undercut the American peoples' quest for a sense of permanence. Agar and most of the book's contributors spoke to the idea of creation of a new system based on the concept of the "property state," in which nearly all Americans could participate in the experience of ownership, be it land, machinery, small businesses, or their own house. This proposition was not some simplistic back-to-the-land scheme or an escape from modern technology. In fact, one of Agar's most trenchant contributors, economist David Cushman Coyle, observed that mass production causes poverty not because of the technology employed, but because of the "financial and business practices that go with large-scale operation." Decentralist intellectuals even mused about the positive benefits that modern technology could bring to the decentralist cause, in the form of electricity, the automobile, and enhanced communications.¹²

Decentralists of all stripes, including Ralph Borsodi who questioned the cost efficiency of mass distribution systems as early as 1929, began to focus on the economic problems of capitalism in addition to its psychological costs. This new focus further divided those who emphasized smaller scale alternatives to mass society from rival reformers who preferred higher level changes. Whereas other intellectuals like Waldo Frank and Stuart Chase opted for more of a cultural cure to the lack of community they found in modern society, the decentralists not only exhorted people to modify their social impulses, but to actively change the structure of property ownership. Some decentralists were therefore drawn to advocate the public ownership of large industrial networks like utilities. Yet it was difficult for them to avoid slipping into the evaluative dichotomy of the urban-industrial being bad and the rural-agricultural being good. Like many other intellectuals of his time, Southern sociologist Howard Odum talked about the mechanistic, impersonal "super-civilization" as opposed to the humane, personal culture as practiced in small towns and in "instinctive" democracy. But

he failed to criticize standard capitalistic practices, and thus was not welcome in the agrarian-decentralist camp. But others did find fault with the concentrationist and monopolistic tendencies of capitalism; ultimately, the urge to decentralize a rapidly concentrating modern society came to make strange bedfellows out of a bewildering variety of thinkers and groups including the Nashville Agrarians, Agar's distributists, Borsodi's suburban homesteaders, Lewis Mumford, Frank Lloyd Wright, and the Catholic Rural Life Conference.¹³

With Who Owns America?, Agar had attempted to unite both the agrarians and the distributists into a national decentralist movement. Not only did his symposium receive mixed reviews, some as harsh as those I'll Take My Stand was subjected to six years earlier, but he somehow alienated most of the Nashville Agrarians in the process. Agar's intended audience, government officials and the middle class, either did not read it or generally ignored it. As a result, Agar's and Tate's effort gathered precious little new support and contributed to a serious breach between the Southern Agrarians and the distributists.¹⁴

The main area of positive response came from an eastern group of ruralists called "Independent Americans." Participants in this eclectic group included leaders of co-operatives, religious rural life organizations, old-line liberals, and followers of iconoclast Ralph Borsodi. Due as much to Agar's initiative as anything, most of these groups and others joined forces, as it were, around a common magazine, Free America, in an effort to augment their influence and disseminate their message. This "fundamental community of aim" brought together decentralists under one banner, except for the most important group, the Southern Agrarians. They believed that they constituted the heart of the decentralist movement, and would not compromise with positions they considered radical. So while the first issue appeared in 1937 to proclaim that it spoke for a united decentralist movement, Tate, Davidson, and the rest were not on board.¹⁵

This movement propounded four main principles: the principle of small industry, the homestead idea and the concept of security in home and property, the principle of consumer cooperation, and the decentralization of industry and government ownership of those centralized facilities which were best operated in the interest of the public at large. In short, they espoused the view that the land was the source of liberation and virtue, and thus, it was the only place to live the good life. The decentralists sought not a classless society, but a society dominated by one class, that of small proprietors. This moral appeal differed only slightly from the position of the Southern Agrarians. They agreed further that a large credit and financial structure should be avoided because it concentrated power too much. But the decentralists' final theme was an action component to their philosophy, which was the major point of differentiation with the Southern Agrarians. The real restoration of property would certainly change society at its core, and that prospect could hardly have sat well with those who looked to the well-ordered society of the Old South. Agar argued for government assistance in the purchase of farmland from banks, loan companies, and insurance companies for its eventual redistribution to poor farmers, especially in the South. He also proposed the decentralization of industry, starting with those areas of manufacturing most easily broken into smaller units. This subject most definitely separated him from the Southern Agrarians, who wanted little to do with industrialism and especially in regions other than the South.¹⁶

Free America published for a decade, but was not able to continue because its editorial board could not be reunited after the war. More importantly, it never galvanized the support necessary for the creation of a mass organization. Burdened by a perception of elitism, decentralists never adequately reached the average person, although Agar strove to demonstrate the practical nature of the decentralist philosophy and its program of social change. The contradiction between the need for government regulation of business and provision of loans to would-be proprietors and the decentralist desire to elude the reach and grasp of major institutional agents was a problem of theory which was never resolved.

Finally, even Agar probably guessed that the decentralist program was a call for radical change, even though it looked back toward traditional values and institutions; it was a summons which charged the emotions of some people, but not enough to bring about substantial societal restructuring, especially if they were enamored with a competing cultural vision like that of suburbanization. "If a reformation is to endure, it must be based on sound political and economic theory; but if a reformation is even to begin, it must be based on an ideal that can stir the human heart." Andrew Lytle contributed a dose of realism in his article "The Small Farm Secures the State," where he observed that the real energy of change had to come from inside the people, not from an external source: "The moral and spiritual centers of a way of life will decide what kind of house, for example, a man will build for himself, how he will conduct himself in all his relationships; they will, in short, determine the cultural values of the community. These cannot be brought in as 'uplift.'"¹⁷

The decentralist program proposed a way of life which emphasized individual freedom, familial security, close communities, participation in democratic activities, and the time to enjoy leisure and not be judged by the monetary or efficiency values of the marketplace. Free America's vision of decentralization had been stated clearly and consistently since its inception: "Free America stands for individual freedom and believes that freedom can exist only in societies in which the great majority are the effective owners of tangible and productive property and in which group action is democratic. In order to achieve such a society, ownership, production, population, and government must be decentralized. Free America is therefore opposed to finance-capitalism, fascism, and communism." Working from a Rousseau-like stance, decentralists believed that if given a free hand, people would naturally create appropriately-sized communities based on the widespread distribution of property. Failing that, they were forced to reform a system which they believed had betrayed them. People then found it difficult to find the depth of gumption and breadth of vision to overcome the competing visions and cultural inertia of the day.¹⁸

Another view of community which drew on the tradition of decentralization was that of regionalism. Many post-World War I intellectuals carried on the optimism of Progressivism, but de-emphasized the national focus in favor of geographically and sub-culturally defined regions within the larger American society. One such regionalist was Lewis Mumford, who highlighted the notion of physical proximity and face-to-face interaction as the basis of all real communities. He envisioned community as based on a social structure composed of family and local neighborhood units. Mumford put his faith not so much in humankind's ability to renovate existing social structures such as the small town or even the city, but in the capacity to innovate new social forms which would combine the best features of the countryside, town, and city.¹⁹

As a term used quite freely in the years between the world wars, "regionalism" had two different definitions. One meaning involved the reformation of America along the lines of interdependent regions, each distinct but contributing to the national whole by virtue of regional identities and strengths. Essentially, this conception of regionalism was a technique utilized through expert planning based on the needs of each region, such as that of the Dust Bowl or the Tennessee River Valley. A second type of regionalism as described by historian John L. Thomas meant "functionally scaled and balanced settlements resting lightly on the landscape and managed cooperatively by friends and neighbors who arranged themselves in communities sustained by direct democracy and a participatory culture . . . fitted to the region and providentially freed from the curse of speculation, exploitation, monopoly, or colonialism." Mumford, Odum, Davidson, Carey McWilliams, and B. A. Botkin among others, were all part of an adversarial tradition which asserted the region as constructive of a better way of life and as a vehicle of cultural pluralism. They would utilize the growing interdependence of regions to build a healthy, but non-domineering national cultural network, while preserving the particular, special variety and diversity of coherent locales. Mumford had already described the problem in The Story of Utopias as one of how to get out

of the duality of "utopias of escape" and the "utopias of reconstruction," or the vagueness of transcendentalism and the enforced stability of collectivism. Mumford looked partly toward planning in the regional context while a non-regionalist such as Waldo Frank looked toward a communitarian vision of society based on elite leadership and shared values. Trying to overcome the inherent duality of thought, Mumford attempted to "see things whole" by letting the ideal guide the imagination, but not allowing it to obscure the facts of everyday life and the diversity of actual places where people lived.²⁰

Regionalism represented a shift in the balance between the locale and territoriality. Generally, regionalists emphasized the locale, but were not as radical, theoretical, or utopian as Mumford--some simply sought cultural sanctuary in folk traditions--and yet, all shared in the movement as a revolt against modernism. Mumford traced the evolution of cities through several historical stages, by which he claimed that the critical connection between the city and its hinterland, the urban and the rural continuum, had been severed as the city, in the form of the bloated megalopolis, unfortunately came to dominate modern society. Neither pro-village or anti-urban, Mumford sought an elusive balance which would provide participatory democracy, human scale, and individual dignity. People would not be compelled by external forces, but would be inspired by organic surroundings, a community built partially by them for themselves, not for a particular class or clique. Neither central cities nor outlying towns would coerce each other, but would interact on the principle of mutual assistance. Regional planning would not just be an aesthetic element, but would have a normative component as well. Having endured three vast migrations beginning with the pioneer, moving to the industrial cities, followed by the flow into financial centers like New York City, Mumford believed (and hoped) that Americans were on the verge of a fourth migration, one of decentralization heading toward the creation of small cities, new towns, and enhanced small towns all interconnected in a federal cultural milieu. Like the decentralists, Mumford and many of the regionalists envisaged some modern technology as

conducive to this dispersion and the creation of a balanced society, such as rural electrification, cars, and modern communications. In reality, however, the fourth migration turned out to be a technologically-aided rush to a different quasi-utopia--the suburbs.²¹

Mumford's ideal communities were not envisioned, however, as places of escape from the central city, but as natural and objective outgrowths of the landscape of river valleys. Mumford borrowed the valley section concept from his mentor, British biologist and community planner, Patrick Geddes. Geddes reasoned that since the natural world is organized into watersheds, human social organization should mimic that order. So Mumford proposed that people should not be arbitrarily crammed into cities wherever they happened to grow up, but that cities should rightly be largest as ports at the mouths of rivers, with the populations of successive cities and towns diminishing as one traversed the river's length up to its source. The topography would demonstrate a permanent "non political grouping of population with respect to soil, climate, vegetation, animal life, industry and historic tradition." The renewal of society would therefore look to no new ideas, but old forms combined in a new way--a synthesis of the environment of the watershed, the family, and the self. Yet, someone or group would have to exhibit a modicum, at least, of leadership. Mumford urged that the revolution be brought on by social scientists, government bureaucrats, and professional planners. Nevertheless, he held out hope that organic communities could be realized in a "society of intelligent amateurs."²²

Mumford looked to the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA), of which he was the secretary and unofficial leader, to help plan his more socialized and decentralized ideal society. This small group included Benton MacKaye, best known as the mind behind the Appalachian Trail, Clarence S. Stein and Henry Wright, coplanners of the new town of Radburn and the innovative housing project Sunnyside Gardens, New York, Catherine Bauer Wurster and Edith Elmer Wood, advocates of public housing, Stuart Chase, the economist, and Charles Harris Whitaker, editor of the Journal of the American Institute of Architects.

Individually and collectively, they made major contributions to the literature of regionalism and to public policy in some cases, including the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Rural Electrification Administration, and greenbelt communities.²³

The RPAA, and especially Mumford, believed that American culture should and could be remade. Their diagnosis of the American malady was remarkably similar to the Southern Agrarians and the decentralists, but their proposed cure was quite different. Common to all three groups was their acceptance of the need for the organic community. But what that concept meant and how it would be achieved set them apart. Mumfordian regionalists allowed that the organic community was one in which people enjoyed a sense of harmony with themselves, with nature, and with their fellow human beings no matter what their economic status. Such a community existed in a state of equilibrium, where membership in the ongoing communitarian primary group was solidified by commitment to a common set of values. But Mumford would countenance no slavish obedience to tradition for its own sake or to static, hierarchical organizations. The planning function, informed by Enlightenment rationalism and Progressive management thought, was crucial to the task of reconstitution of cultural places, especially urban environs. The term he used for this process was "organic planning," which succinctly contained a fundamental ambivalence in Mumford's philosophy. The city could not be given up for dead, because in the past it had helped to focus social energy in ways that forced whole civilizations to achieve higher cultural syntheses. He looked back to medieval towns for his ideal of how communities should proceed to reform themselves along organic lines. Organic urbanism was a creative process, one of adaptation to unique local needs which was both spontaneous and supervised, artful and controlled. The restoration of organic cities in the twentieth century required the same sort of inventory of environmental, social, and individual needs, fitted into an overarching, comprehensive vision, that transcended materialist, marketplace, or technocratic considerations. Mumfordian regionalists were thus not content with Ferdinand Tonnies' Gemeinschaft and

Gesellschaft dualism, but sought out a higher dialectical synthesis. The small, personal, village atmosphere of local production and consumption was inadequate to modern needs, while the market-driven, more impersonal, corporate mass society was too overbearing and overwhelming of the human spirit. The RPAA thus envisioned a hybrid community form, utopian in that its planning component would stimulate the appearance of common goals by means of an ideal organizational structure, yet practical in its solicitation of and response to the local needs of residents. The RPAA believed they had the institutional forms such as the garden city, the townless highway, rural electrification, and economic planning to initiate decentralization of urban areas where appropriate and begin the transformation of American society.²⁴

The RPAA first made a name for itself in 1925, with the publication of the May issue of Survey Graphic, in which all of the articles were written by RPAA members. Clarence Stein identified the enemy as "dinosaur cities." By 1931, the grand study of the future of New York City commissioned by the Russell Sage Foundation in 1921 was completed. Work on the Regional Plan of New York and Its Environs was led by the famous planner Thomas Adams, and most people expected his continued adherence to the concept of garden cities first propounded by Englishman Ebenezer Howard around the turn of the twentieth century. Adams' failure to move away from "dinosaur cities" prompted Lewis Mumford to issue a scathing critique, sanctioned by the RPAA, of the New York Plan. Mumford believed that regional planning as it had grown up in the 1920s was nothing more than planning for future megalopolises and suburban sprawl. The answer to this was to be found in forester and RPAA member Benton MacKaye's The New Exploration (1928). The holistic regional planner identified three fundamental cultural environments: the primeval, the rural, and the cosmopolitan, all of which are necessary for the fullest development of humanity. Any diminution in any of them and the whole suffers. MacKaye saw all three components as being flooded out of existence by the tidalwave of metropolitan spread. From this

perspective, the job of regional planners was to stop this flood and allow communities time to reset reciprocal relationships between the worlds of human experience--wilderness, rural, and urban. True regional communities would partake of all three simultaneously.²⁵

However much other regionalists might move to agrarian or decentralist ideas, the Mumfordian regionalists never gave up hope for a "decentralized producerist culture" within a primarily urban context. Mumford observed that homestead projects and other rural experiments promulgated by some neo-Jeffersonians often manifested escapism and elitism since they were trying to provide a place "into which people may escape from a sordid workaday world, whereas the real problem . . . is to remake the workaday world so that people will not wish to escape from it!" He found the Southern Agrarians especially wanting because their proposals were "haunted by the wistful phantoms of the past--the gentry, episcopalianism, feudalism, a narrow nativism." He also took aim at the chief rival of the Nashville Agrarians in the South, North Carolina sociologist Howard Odum, with whom Mumford had formerly shared some common ground. Odum's regionalism tended to consist of a conflict-free theory of social change heavily rooted in a geographical environmentalism, wrapped up in traditional nationalism. Mumford wrote in 1928 that modern capitalism had coopted industrialization into "a function of banking and credit. The economies of power, machinery, the natural resources of individual regions, all the elements that contribute to the livelihood of a community, are perverted, under financial conventions that more or less dominate all minds, into an apparatus estimated almost exclusively in terms of profits and dividends." Mumford was little concerned with Odum's anxiety to harmonize sectional differences at whatever the cost.²⁶

Mumford followed regionalist developments of all types closely, as shown by his correspondence with agrarian George Weller in the late 1930s. Agricultural semi-self-sufficiency was but one valid way of achieving a better balance between the locale and the larger territory. A traditional urban residential form like the apartment was, in Mumford's

view, not necessarily cut off from the land, because ideally an apartment dweller should be able to have access to at least a garden plot if it should be desired. Mumford also looked fondly on Henry Ford's village industries experiment--the kind of regionalism Mumford advocated. Those small, but modern plants in impoverished small towns and villages were still interconnected with the larger world, in this case, the mammoth Highland Park and River Rouge plants in Detroit. The larger world called out to the members of RPAA during the New Deal years. Many of them took positions in the federal government, but were seldom able to significantly influence policy. This dispersal of membership contributed to the demise of the RPAA, although Clarence Stein attempted to revive the group under the name of the Regional Development Council of America. Regionalism as part of the anti-modernist critique fell on hard times after World War II, attacked by consensus historians, social scientific structuralism, and the liberal, corporate, managerial mentality. To most people, Emersonianism, Neo-Jeffersonianism, and the process of cultural renewal outlined by Mumford were largely unnecessary; the outcome of World War II and the fruits of reindustrialization, growth, and consumerism proved that. The only region most people were interested in was that bounded by the promised new utopia, suburbia.²⁷

The regional vision of community reform existed not just within a small circle of intellectuals like the RPAA, but penetrated the ranks of the federal government in the form of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Regionalists flocked to the TVA banner because it seemed to promise a regional focus within a national context. It would demonstrate the efficiencies and organizational streamlining of the democratic planning function while reaching out to the grass roots needs of particular locales. Finally, it would be an instrument of decentralization as it brought about economic development. The RPAA membership and many other liberals responded to the TVA with great enthusiasm. Both MacKaye and one of the last RPAA members, Tracy Augur, joined the TVA staff. Stuart Chase became an unofficial national publicist for the regional development concept. Augur, as chief town

planner for the TVA, supervised the design and construction of three model new towns, which largely represented the extent of TVA's community planning.²⁸

From the beginning, the TVA's mission was tied to power production, flood control, and navigation on the Tennessee River. The agency's genesis was intimately connected to the tangled history of the federally owned and operated Muscle Shoals project in northern Alabama. Originally built to provide fertilizer and nitrates for ammunition during World War I, Senator George W. Norris successfully fought off attempts at privatization by countering with his own perennially submitted bills for continued federal ownership and enlargement of its activities at Muscle Shoals. Franklin Roosevelt's election in 1932 almost guaranteed passage of Norris's Muscle Shoals bill, and opened up the entire Tennessee Valley to an expanded federal role. As much as Norris, the president is seen by many as having played a major role in the shaping of the TVA Act. Roosevelt was enamored with the idea of "planning," and often tied it into his idealistic dreams for rural and regional development. In this he was influenced by Arthur E. Morgan, whose idea of a valley-wide project in community rebuilding coincided with the president's interest in region-wide reforestation, proper use of natural resources, and the plight of the unemployed and impoverished. Hence, Roosevelt was instrumental in getting the enabling legislation broadened to include many activities well beyond the power production function. A speech delivered on December 11, 1934, defined the TVA along these enlarged lines: "There is a much bigger situation behind the Tennessee Valley Authority. . . . you will realize that we are conducting a social experiment that is the first of its kind in the world, . . . [in] the watershed of a great river. The work proceeds along two lines, both of which are intimately connected--the physical land and water and soil end of it, and the human side of it. It proceeds on the assumption that we are going to the highest mountain peak of the Tennessee Watershed . . . and say "What should this land be used for, and is it being badly used at the present time? And a few feet farther down we are going to come to [an Appalachian farmer]

. . . He certainly has been forgotten, not by the Administration, but by the American people. They are going to see that he and his children have a chance, . . . we are going to try to bring him some of the things he needs, like schools, electric lights, and so on. We are going to try to prevent soil erosion, and grow trees, and try to bring in industries." It was this kind of noble and lofty vision, although written into the enabling legislation in general and vague terms, which attracted tremendous attention and interest from every quarter of American society, especially that of the reformist camp, including small communitarians.²⁹

After the TVA's founding, those who looked for reform in the agency tended to see in it the type of reform they wanted to see. In 1950 with the Cold War taking on its recognizable form, English historian Denis Brogan viewed the TVA as "a great crusading enterprise whose success or failure would, it was thought, demonstrate the possibility of free, democratic planning in a world in which 'planning' had become a panacea, but a panacea whose effective use seemed confined to authoritarian states." Although much of its reform mantle was self-generated or created by fervant advocates outside of the TVA itself, its true reformist nature was still evident after its initial aura had worn off. Yet, the TVA's mission was an ambiguous one, torn between Norris's "action program" of power, flood control, and fertilizer production, and the ideas of rural planning and development. The legislative mandate for the action measures was quite clear; the social welfare agenda proposed by Roosevelt, however, was little understood and was statutorily ill-defined. The first chairman of the TVA, Arthur Morgan, wanted not only to clarify the social welfare aspect, but expand it dramatically. He wanted a far-reaching forestry and conservation program, the establishment of co-operatives, amalgamation of all power sites in the valley, creation of decentralized industries in the valley, assistance to the indigenous craft industry, and a general socioeconomic plan for the entire valley. This was not only reformist, but radical thinking verging on utopianism, because it sought near-perfect solutions despite the cost. The other two directors of the three man board quickly challenged Arthur Morgan's vision of

the future of the TVA. Harcourt Morgan's particular interest was in agriculture and fertilizer production, and he rapidly began working with established government farm agencies. David Lilienthal's purview concerned the public utility aspect of the TVA's domain. A showdown over the fundamental direction of the TVA resulted in a division of powers between the three leaders. Ultimately, a state of divided leadership emerged, and when Arthur Morgan could not or would not publicly back up charges he made against the other two directors, the president was forced to fire him in 1937. Arthur Morgan's tenure as chairman and chief engineer did contribute to the novel and successful personnel and administrative methods used by the TVA in its unprecedented combination and scope of activities. Yet the direction of the agency was firmly set in the first four years along the lines of economic development, not social welfare: 89.1% of the budget was spent on physical construction, while only .08% was spent on rural planning and social experimentation.³⁰

People around the world were impressed by not only the scale of the undertaking, but in the unity of purpose they observed, especially among the myriad types of experts working together. Well-known writer-agroecologist Louis Bromfield commented: "In my travels over the world I have seen many people who are interested in flood control or in nutrition or in forestry; in navigation, in agriculture, and so on. But nowhere, until I visited the Tennessee Valley, had I found all the specialists working together, unifying their efforts and their objectives and making remarkable progress for the overall, long-time good of the land and the people." Southern Agrarians generally approved of the TVA; Henry Blue Kline observed that what was good for the Tennessee Valley was good for the entire South. Herman Nixon found the TVA's efforts toward industrial decentralization to be real strides toward making factories more responsive to local needs. The Agrarians looked toward the TVA as a utility savior, delivering the South from the exploitive clutches of northern utility holding companies. The only Southern Agrarian to oppose the TVA was Donald Davidson, who viewed it as a foreign, paternalistic entity, whose bureaucratic power would use its planning

apparatus to ruin southern culture. "As it stands now, the TVA is an irresponsible projection of a planned, functional society into the midst of one of the most thoroughly democratic parts of the United States."³¹

The heuristic impact of the TVA on American society was anticipated early on by large institutional observers despite the reservations of certain well-known individuals like Davidson. The Rockefeller Foundation, for example, was already involved in the study of the South, having appropriated \$45,000 in 1933, to Howard Odum of the University of North Carolina. The Foundation's General Education Board assigned the study of the TVA to the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 1936, and saw it as an extension of Odum's earlier work. Arthur Morgan promised full cooperation for the study of the administrative aspects of a quasi-public corporation, and its unique use at the federal level. Some early reports to the Foundation relied heavily on TVA publicity which indicated the guiding hand of Arthur Morgan, who thought that TVA would be a model for possible future projects like Boulder Dam and the reclamation of the Imperial Valley. He viewed it was part of an effort to eliminate waste and make a new system of planned living possible; something that would be "nothing short of a new civilization in this region." In fact, Morgan called TVA more of an "experiment in planning and designing a new economic order." He thought it should become an area of small industries, "the France of America." Despite Morgan's optimism, the SSRC reported to the Foundation in 1934 that most of the changes brought about by the TVA were physical and that means would be overemphasized and ends lost track of. Where Davidson worried about the consequences of planned change for the South, the Rockefeller Foundation was concerned that planned physical changes would have unplanned consequences on its political and educational systems. The Foundation envisioned its role in rural and community development as a facilitator of case studies of southern counties to see how the new electrical power and its supposed benefits could best be used to achieve the final goal of a "planned social and economic order."³²

The most utopian of the planned visions of a new cultural order led by the TVA was the one advocated by Arthur Morgan. He was fairly well known before being appointed to the chairmanship of the TVA, having gained recognition as a innovative civil engineer involved in flood control projects on the Miami River in Ohio, and as the president of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He brought a touch of perfectionism and the older nineteenth-century type of moralism to the TVA in many ways, but especially in the form of a basic ethical code for all TVA personnel. The TVA under Arthur Morgan's leadership would bring about the creation of the good place not only by the construction of physical structures and social arrangements, but also through moral leadership, because if "we should leave an example of deceit, exploitation, favoritism, patronage, extravagance, bad personal habits, and selfish personal ambitions, our efforts might do more harm than good." For Morgan, utopia and the only real possibility for community came down to individual honesty and right behavior according to his neo-Victorian dogmas. Strong leadership by example and even decree was necessary to inculcate the proper ethical and cooperative habits; here the voices of Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, and Edward Bellamy are heard rising out of utopian history.³³

The small community would be further strengthened in Morgan's view by developing small industry in the Valley. He proposed an idea of cooperative production, distribution, and sales, which ideally would produce a more self-involved, self-sufficient economic life for Valley residents. Morgan hoped that they would buy at home, even speculating on the use of a type of credit which would only be good for cooperative goods, not for those from outside the region. Cooperatives were begun with TVA help which included a number of canneries, two creameries, two poultry farms, and the beginnings of a cooperative handicraft industry. Problems developed immediately in terms of quality, marketing opportunities, and cash flow.³⁴

Morgan's utopian influence was most notable in the design and development of Norris, one of three planned new towns built by the TVA. Norris was to be built near the construction site of the giant Norris Dam, and would function both as a construction camp town and a model community. Norris would be a test case of sorts for the concept of regional planning. The design featured an English garden city of largely single family houses on small acreages, replete with a concentric greenbelt. Originally designed for 10,000 people, Norris never had more than 3,000. Lack of funds, the need to house construction workers, and the fact that Tracy Augur's design crew finished their work after the town was partially occupied hampered the development of Norris as a model town. The workers' houses, although well built, did not provide much privacy. Only a small percentage of the residences were provided with all-electric utilities. Augur's plan included a town center including a school and shopping area, a shop area suitable for future industries, and the construction camp which could be converted to commercial uses after the completion of the dam. The school was a large, state-of-the-art building, and soon became associated with the county system. It housed a progressive library and was the scene of a variety of classes for both children and adults. Arthur Morgan himself and his wife took up residence Norris to help lend support for its many imaginative community programs. The TVA provided for a health service and even a landscape architect, plus it started a number of service businesses which were supplemented by a growing array of private stores. The people of Norris also developed some of their own cooperative activities such as a credit union and a courier service. In all, a total of \$3.5 million of federal money was spent on the entire project which encompassed 4,200 acres.³⁵

As the dam was completed, most of the construction workers moved away, and this plus the changing composition of the population hurt the cooperative nature of the community. Although the town evolved a home government, many of the programs started by the TVA shrank or stopped completely. The vocational training programs, agricultural

instruction, and the dairy farm all disappeared. The soil was of poor quality there, so little agriculture took root. Norris was well on its way to becoming a quaint suburban town only five years after its 1934 occupancy. The TVA still employed many of the new residents, but most of them commuted to Knoxville on a daily basis. As the town slowly lost population and the TVA extricated itself from its somewhat paternal position, Norris remained a picturesque, well-ordered place, but failed to create an identity for itself.³⁶

As a *bedroom community for commuters* and with Morgan's vision gone by the 1940s, the TVA decided, under Congressional pressure, to auction Norris off to the highest bidder. In 1948, a group of Philadelphia businessmen made an offer of just over two million dollars to just outbid a group of Norris citizens. Similar but slightly different fates awaited the two other TVA planned communities: both Fontana Village and Hiwassee Dam Village were located in North Carolina; the former became a summer resort and the latter became part of the North Carolina state park system. Critical observers of the communities note that Norris in particular never lived up to the expectations of the people it was supposed to help the most--namely, the dispossessed and the agricultural poor of the region. It should be said, however, that some type of small community did persist there and the relatively high quality of life definitely had something to do with the idealistic original design and physical arrangement of the community.³⁷

The Norris community project represented the same themes which helped to catapult the TVA into the leading institutional example of reform in the New Deal. At least in theory, Norris as a community was supposed to address the needs of the poor and those to be resettled because of permanent flooding of their lands by the new reservoirs. This idea tied in with the notion of economic justice and democratic distribution of resources. Progressivism also manifested a commitment to entrepreneurialism, and Norris ideally partook in that theme inasmuch as it sought to entice decentralized industry to its area. Finally, Progressivism was also apparent in the limited quest for the small community by the

TVA in that Norris was built with an eye toward efficiency, the conservation movement, and regional governmental planning. As such, Norris was representative of its reformist times, but as brought to life by the TVA, it was a unique social experiment, which like the TVA's program for social welfare, was tied too closely to the utopian vision of one man. Under the leadership of Harcourt Morgan, and later, David Lilienthal, the TVA moved farther away from Arthur Morgan's vision of cultural experimentation toward the more well-defined mission of power production and infrastructural development. Whether the TVA was a grass-roots democracy as Lilienthal proclaimed, or an all-devouring leviathan as Davidson believed, it as the only project of its kind in the world and the largest producer of electrical power in the United States, initially at least, allowed for the existence of a place to demonstrate the good life by means of the small community. No one knew, however, if Norris really was the best model or not, because it was just one of many community experiments carried on by the government in the 1930s.³⁸

Even though comprehensive planning was essentially dead in the TVA by 1936, other federal government programs concerned with the small community were still active, although not expanding. Communities had been planned or initiated by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the Resettlement Administration (RA), and the Division of Subsistence Homesteads. The New Deal strategy of federal intervention did not fundamentally change the "American system of development." By incorporating the idea of "planning" as a basic element in its approach to correcting social problems, the New Deal drew on a turn-of-the-century discipline which involved planning in both urban and rural environments. Interest in rural planning originated at least with Theodore Roosevelt and the Rural Life Commission. Urban planning is easily traced back to landscape architects such as Frederick Law Olmstead and Charles Eliot who proposed the continuous city-park-garden concept. Planning was extended in the 1920s to the region and the state. Centralized authority in regulatory functions became commonplace during the time of Progressive

reform, with acceptance of the zoning concept, health and housing standards, the rationalization of roads and transportation, and the notion of the community as a system whose parts had to be managed and ordered to function properly. This showed a propensity, even in urban planning, at least early on, to defer slightly to a rural mentality and its localism, and certainly to the idea of place.³⁹

When the New Deal practitioners began their community building after 1932, they often looked to a theoretical planning perspective known as the Garden City movement. Its founder, Englishman Ebenezer Howard, promulgated a vision of community which was a synthesis of rural and urban elements in a book entitled Garden Cities of Tomorrow (1898). The British government made the most use of the concept, building twenty-eight new towns of various designs after World War II. In the United States, advocates used it to challenge conventional urban forms, but it made little headway in actual application. Some proponents believed they were using it when all they created were more park-like suburbs. Howard intended garden cities to have a population of no more than 32,000 and to ideally occupy 6,000 acres. The land itself would be owned by a single, cooperative entity of community members to protect it from real estate speculation. It was hoped that the benefits of large scale planning would filter down to produce a good municipal government insulated from national political chicanery and corruption. Howard desired that all economic groups or classes be represented in the community so that it would not succumb to elitism and that the less fortunate might receive any potential redistribution of collective benefits. In addition to being limited in size, the nature of the production structure would be altered to allow more self-sufficiency in material goods. Congestion could be eliminated while simultaneously fostering more community-based production. Finally, each garden city community would utilize a surrounding greenbelt to limit its own size, and encroachments by external forces. The non-developed land would also serve as farmland and as a recreational/wildlife environment.⁴⁰

Although some American manufacturing corporations did build a few new industrial towns according to the garden city premise, it was left to the private group of architects and regional visionaries known as the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) to bring the garden city philosophy to America and apply it formally. Their main contribution in this regard was the "Radburn Idea," which became the basis for the federal government's plans for greenbelt communities. As the brainchild of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, they intended it "to answer the enigma 'How to live with the auto.'" They perceived a growing need for security, both physical and emotional, in American communities, made more acute as the auto disrupted life and rendered the gridiron pattern of settlement obsolete. The RPAA worked informally through a corporation set up by financier Alexander Bing to build the satellite town of Radburn sixteen miles from New York City in Fairlawn, New Jersey, on a 1,258 acre tract of land. Designed for 25,000, it opened to its first residents in 1929. The town was divided into three clusters, each of which was designed for 7,500 people. Each cluster, or village as they were called, were oriented around its own elementary school and shopping area, which was based on RPAA member Clarence Perry's application of his "neighborhood concept." Stein, Wright, and Frederick Ackerman planned the town without a gridiron pattern to save money on streets and utilities, which would be used to help pay for the common parks in the centers of the three residential areas. Yet, a fundamental difference from the garden city emerged when no extra land for the greenbelt could be obtained. The architects also did not hold the land in common ownership, only the parks. Additionally, the population was quite homogeneous, being mainly of moderate incomes. Radburn dealt innovatively with the automobile, however, separating streets from sidewalks completely through the novel use of overpasses and short tunnels. Houses faced the common green, and each had a place for a garden. The designers wished to fortify what they saw as the basic social unit of society, the family. The structure of the community buttressed this desire, since houses within each village were arranged in superblocs of one mile in

circumference and 40 acres in size. The internally situated park for each superblock focused its neighborhood life, creating a safe, healthy, creative, and relaxing environment for families to mix and easily form friendships. The designers consciously altered the emphasis on the collective to one of individual nuclear families within a neighborhood environment, which the designers believed more suited a modern age and American attitudes.⁴¹

Like the later small communitarians, Radburn's designers wrestled with the darker physical and social consequences of modernity in the form of the giant city. They wanted to soften, if not eliminate, its deleterious effects such as dangers to health, safety, and life, congestion, loneliness, lack of nature, waste of time, money, and energy, and ugliness. In this regard, Stein observed, "Man is submerged in the colossal human swarm, his individuality overwhelmed, his personality negated, his essential dignity is lost in crowds without a sense of community." New towns, such as Radburn, were envisioned as being "planned, built, and operated to serve present day needs and conditions." This included increasing equality of opportunity and diversity of community residents, but they were not successful in their attempt to create affordable, low-income housing. They ended up advocating governmental help in creating extensive low-income housing projects. But they did build an environment which was decidedly not a replication of the interminable faceless urban tracts of the traditional city. There were no tall buildings, no overwhelming concentrations of people and physical materials to mar the harmony and natural beauty built into Radburn. It had fulfilled the hopes of leading social theorists like Charles Cooley and Robert Park. The emphasis at Radburn was on Cooley's idea of the social development of personality, and on Park's attention to the concept of "place." People could easily relate to an organic place and even develop the all important primary relationships touted by Louis Wirth as only achievable in nonurban places. Yet, the outside world did intrude upon Radburn, when the Depression forced it to suspend construction before it was finished and dispose of all its undeveloped land. Nevertheless, Radburn became something of a "leisure

community," a near college campus with few of the concerns of an industrial town or of a financial center. Looking back, Stein believed that the experience of Radburn and subsequent greenbelt towns proved that "The neighborhood community is now accepted as the basic unit of city building as well as planning. Small neighborhoods are essential for eye-to-eye democracy--and this is basic, not only for local contentment, but for national freedom and worldwide security."⁴²

Radburn was not a complete failure or complete success, and it became an example of what could be done and the inherent problems in the planning process. As the 1930s wore on, more and more people turned to planning as a panacea. In the three years between 1930 and 1933, six significant legislative programs authorizing a national planning body were proposed in Congress, and nine substantial "private" plans were counted. Historian Charles Beard, economist Stuart Chase, and labor leader John L. Lewis all called for some sort of national planning commission. The New Deal did respond to these calls, but New Dealers were seldom ideologically unified and were uncertain of how to proceed, so they often took a "try-what-works" approach. They were hampered by the fact that the New Deal had no one specific perspective on urban area amelioration. In the end, comprehensive planning largely failed because of ideological tussles, local backlashes, and a vocal public minority which viewed planning as fascistic, totalitarian, elitist, and socialistic. Yet, the federal government did enter the planned-community field, and it was influenced by three distinct types of planning theory. One theme was rural resettlement of displaced farmers and urban workers. Another element was the city planning movement which brought the new town concept to the attention of government planners. Finally, national economic planning looked at the allocation of national resources, the unemployment problem, and the distribution of industries across the landscape. Combined, these planning threads promised an optimistic, future-oriented perspective which would help get the country moving again, and not just in

the "right" direction, but toward a wholly better life for individual Americans as well as the national collectivity.⁴³

The Resettlement Administration (RA), under the direction of Rexford Tugwell, became the major force in national government for the initiation of new communities. Since the RA inherited many of its community project from the Division of Subsistence Homesteads and other agencies, it had a multifaceted and divided purpose from its inception. Thus, Tugwell was faced with the job of resettling farmers on marginal land to farms with better soil, helping farmers who were "borderline" to upgrade and expand their facilities, and aiding displaced people and urbanites who wanted to move to the country in creating new towns located near larger centers of employment. He believed that the only hope for both rural and urban refugees from technological obsolescence would be in an environment halfway between rural and urban, in what came to be called greenbelt cities. Therefore, Tugwell sought out an alternative to either rural resettlement or slum clearance--satellite cities. "My idea is to go just outside centers of population, pick up cheap land, build a whole community and entice people to it, then go back into the cities and tear down whole slums and make parks of them." The original motivation for greenbelt funding, however, came out of a bill to provide jobs, not so much to develop federally-funded garden cities. In this respect it was a mildly successful program, employing a total of over 13,000 people at Greenbelt alone, one of the three greenbelt communities built.⁴⁴

Greenbelt towns were to be complete communities, with close parallels to garden cities. Tugwell hoped that thousands could be built, but lack of appropriations and various local impediments never allowed for that (for example, Greenbrook, a planned greentown at New Brunswick, New Jersey, failed to get off the drafting board due to a local legal challenge). Yet there was a certain utopian promise about the greenbelt cities: they would provide jobs, use land better, create low cost housing, spawn pleasant living conditions and full-bodied community lives, they would end cultural deprivation, and even provide both a

local and a national symbol to rally around. They were perceived, at least within the RA, much as Norris had been at the TVA by Arthur Morgan, as harbingers of a new social and economic order, examples of the best products of trained minds and enlightened planning. They would ideally leave behind forever both the nineteenth-century industrial city and the isolated farmstead of traditional rural life.⁴⁵

All three greentowns--Greendale near Milwaukee, Greenhills near Cincinnati, and Greenbelt in Maryland--shared the same fate: sale by the government after 1949 to various types of buyers. None of the towns retained their greenbelts intact, and all suffered continuous criticism by conservative politicians, civic leaders, and construction industry leaders. Critics were correct about their cost; per unit cost was in one case over \$10,000. But none of the greentowns was ever expanded to the size specified in the original designs, which would have brought the per unit cost down to more reasonable levels. On a more basic level though, the towns did fulfill their function as demonstration communities, although they perhaps did not influence the larger society as much as anticipated. But residents did create, with the government's help, true close-knit communities replete with cooperative businesses, community associations, and community gatherings, newspapers, and genuine pride in residence and place. The greentowns also influenced subsequent development of new towns, most of course, privately financed and designed. Reston, Virginia, built in the 1960s, and Columbia, Maryland, also begun in the 1960s, and often called the "most successful American new town," harken back to the garden cities, Radburn, and the greentowns in their combination of greenbelts, mixed housing, appropriate architecture, pleasing natural vistas, and lack of congestion. Despite the fact that all of these community forms had some resemblance (to a much diminished extent in the newer towns) to the pre-industrial village structure, none of them attempted to emulate it in more than physical, social, or political ways, leaving out the economic and technological replication. All of these places attained a high standard of living and a naturally, leisure-filled existence.

But all them were dependent on the auto for all of their mobility and most of their amenities. In addition, they all shared in the same belief that communities of limited size, based on comprehensive planning, and built to put people first were innately superior to any other kind of residential arrangement ever devised by human beings. But interestingly, the issue of size differentiated them the most from Howard's Garden Cities, in that he wanted to limit size to bring about an economic revolution, and not the social transformation which American new town builders have been more concerned with. Finally, it is unclear in which direction the balance between locality and territoriality was shifted by the establishment of new towns. The basic objective was to bring about a greater localism, yet it was obvious with the greentowns that this was to happen within the national context. The achievement of enlarged experiences of individualism, for the most part occurred within the parameters of a more pervasive mass society. Greater levels of prosperity and national wealth have allowed for greater expression of individuality; both conditions have cried out in the past, and continue to do so, for a greater commitment to the realization of a genuine community suitable for our times.⁴⁶

The whole concept of new towns as a means by which social ills could be treated received support from not only those who leaned toward suburban solutions, as in the case of greentowns, but also from those who advocated more rural-oriented treatments. Like the social scientists who promulgated the greenbelts, rural economists such as Milburn L. Wilson, Mordecai Ezekiel, and Howard Tolley were of the type characterized by historian Richard Kirkendall as the "service intellectual." "Rejecting alienation, the ivory tower, and the left bank, as well as assumptions about the inherent impracticality of academic men, the service intellectual insists that society needs men of academically trained intelligence . . ." They believed that the Great Depression was the main symptom of a failed socio-economic system, and that the need for a dramatically altered system was even more necessary in rural America if traditional democracy and community values were to persevere. They observed

that the entire structure of rural society was in the process of transformation to a more efficient, thinly populated farm economy. Rather than allow this historical trend to alter the fabric of society on its own, they believed it should be managed by experts according to many of the same tenets held by the proponents of the small community analyzed herein. They believed in a vision of a new rural America, based on contemporarily built and planned small towns covering the countryside, which would attract industry in a vast movement toward decentralization of the economy based on regional strengths and needs, distribution of fertile land to marginal farmers, and a greater integration of town and country. Although this somewhat utopian dream drew on many sources of support including groups and movements traditionally individualistic and libertarian in outlook like the back-to-the-land movement, farm organizations, civic leaders, and the magazine Liberty, the M. L. Wilson-led group had a decidedly communitarian orientation. They would build real communities, often referred to as subsistence homesteads, rather than hand out emergency payments to farmers as other agricultural reformers proposed.⁴⁷

The notion of the subsistence homestead provided the contents for Wilson's theoretical ideal of what he called the "community idea." It would not only create a new physical arrangement for living, but it would attempt to inculcate new principles and behaviors for living. Wilson hoped that such a community could be a buffer against extreme materialism, individualism, and competition in which people would lead simpler, but eminently more secure lives. He defined a subsistence homestead as the "home of an industrial or agricultural worker who earns a cash wage from seasonal or part time employment and uses his free time for the production of food for home consumption." The collectivity of these individual homesteads would constitute the rural village or town of Wilson's vision. While not really a new idea, Wilson realized the "modern" American had come to see it as somewhat outdated and even foreign. Thus, Wilson emphasized that "Somehow, or in some

way, attitudes and live of the families who occupy these communities must be integrated so as to provide a new and different view of life and a new and different set of family values." This psychic transformation would be accomplished by a two pronged attack, one by means of a comprehensive educational effort to teach community skills, and the other by means of actual experience in community living.⁴⁸

The subsistence homestead program, as an institutional entity, gained its existence through the New Deal legislation of the National Industrial Recovery Act. Interior secretary Harold Ickes was instructed to administer the \$25 million appropriation to create subsistence homesteads as one aspect of an assault on the rural American crisis. Rather than place this program in the Public Works Administration under Robert Kohn, which probably would have meant a smaller number of communities more along the lines of a few farm colonies and more Radburn-type housing projects, Ickes put it in a separate bureau to which he appointed M. L. Wilson as its head. This decision by Ickes came after a meeting of a virtual "who's who" list of alternative community leaders including Arthur Morgan, John Nolen, noted city planner, Elwood Mead, decentralized communities advocate, Bruce Melvin, a rural sociologist, Henry A. Wallace, Bernarr Macfadden, leader of the back-to-the-land movement, Rex Tugwell, M. L. Wilson and other farm economists. This unwieldy coalition supported and sympathized with the plight of rural residents, and generally supported industrial decentralization, part-time farming, and continued "independent" existence on the land. The agrarian dream still lived in the minds of these leaders and they wanted desperately for rural folk to gain title to their land so they could control their own destinies. Thus, most of them were willing to approach the radicalism of one of the Nashville Agrarians, Frank Owsley, who wrote that "The enemy is a system which allows a relatively few men to control most of the nation's wealth and to regiment virtually the whole population under their anonymous holding companies and corporations, and to control government by bribery and intimidation."⁴⁹

Wilson feared for the future of democracy under such conditions; and for him democracy was the closest human beings could get to an absolute. He believed that people should take the example of 1830s New England where rural dwellers were able to combine farm and factory work near water-powered mills. The cash earned in the factories was used to buy things they were not able to produce on the farms. That security and independence could be replicated in a more modern setting through the use of subsistence homestead communities. Wilson believed that he lived in an age where cultural forms lagged behind technological innovations, and that subsistence homesteads were the very cultural reform which could catch up with technology and produce a balanced civilization. He said "The subsistence homestead program is, therefore, not the creation of a new idea so much as the modern interpretation of an old tendency." Like other advocates of the small community, Wilson realized that technological advances like rural electricity, cars, and the radio could enhance rural life and make his experiment more likely to succeed. Furthermore, he saw a potentially developing conflict between city and country life in which country life would lose. With the help of subsistence homesteads, this conflict could be eliminated by a union of the best of both worlds. Wilson did not see his program as a stopgap measure or merely a jobs program, but it was "intended rather to point the way to certain basic readjustments in population and industry upon which a more stable society can be built." Above all, Wilson wanted a grass-roots participation by rural people, and so only projects submitted by the people themselves were allowed into the process of acceptance. Each project had to have strong local backing and would consist of about 25 to 100 families on small acreages which they could purchase at reasonable prices on contract. Planning experts would approve community sites and lend assistance on a variety of subjects. Homesteaders would be chosen through a rigorous selection process taking into consideration low income status, character suitability, personal motivation, and agricultural experience. Federal funds would be distributed in the form of loans, not grants, to be repaid over 30 years at 4 percent interest.⁵⁰

As with the greentown program, the subsistence homestead program quickly ran into difficulties. Leadership within the government was divided, so when Ickes federalized all the subsistence homesteads in May 1934, critics were not surprised. Wilson's decentralized administrative structure did not sit well with Ickes, but its revocation stirred up more resentment on the local level and created much ill will toward the program early in its history. True, some local organizers had acted as petty dictators, and the distribution of money was a bit loose, but that was in keeping with Wilson's philosophy of working closely with local leaders of all kinds. He even allowed a community near Austin, Minnesota to go forward despite being sponsored by the president of Hormel Packing Company, the major employer in town. This episode led to mounting criticism from labor unions that the government was being used by corporate management to undercut the working class. Opposition also developed in the agricultural community among traditional farm organizations and agribusiness concerns. They believed the program threatened established farmers and the ideology of capitalism itself. Even well-meaning people often hurt individual projects by their meddling, such as Eleanor Roosevelt's involvement in the Arthurdale project which was a prime reason for it running way over budget. The Dayton, Ohio project never really got off the ground when its organizer, Ralph Borsodi, refused to accept any federal oversight and quit after receiving a loan for only \$50,000. Wilson's concept of "creative community development" was never developed to its logical conclusion because Wilson himself was relieved of duty when the Subsistence Homesteads Division (SHD) was merged into the Tugwell's Resettlement Administration in May, 1935. In all, the SHD initiated 34 communities containing over 3,300 housing units. The RA initiated 37 communities with over 5,200 units. FERA initiated 28 communities containing over 2,400 units, some of which were of the subsistence homestead type. The RA totals of course contained the greenbelt communities, which, as has been previously discussed, were not of the homestead variety. In two cases, the RA so altered the plans of homestead communities

as to make them into smaller versions of modified greenbelt towns. But both types of communities did stress the need for cooperation and the desirability of developing cooperative industries and businesses.⁵¹

Tugwell's vision of reform along lines nearer to an urban-oriented community helped stalemate the subsistence homestead program. No new communities were designed and not all the ones planned were completed. The communities had been in Wilson's own words demonstration projects, and as such, they were successful at showing the advantages and problems of such a scheme. But that was about the extent of their influence, as the country restarted its rural exodus to urban and then, suburban places in the 1940s. But significantly, the attempt was the only plan among industrial nations to absorb excess agricultural labor and at the same time to decentralize industry. A contemporary parallel to the programs of the 1930s to repopulate rural America curiously exists in the present trend toward moving back to small towns and rural crossroads in order to recapture some of the attributes of country life or even, in some cases, the former rural culture itself.⁵²

One of the earliest advocates of decentralization with respect to the small community faced the problem of industrialization more directly and put less emphasis on problems of housing than did government social scientists. Henry Ford believed that centralized industrial development contributed to the creation of increasingly expensive, normless, and unlivable cities where the virtues of nineteenth-century life he had known (that mix of farming, residential, and commercial influences in small-town America) were threatened with extinction. Simultaneously, rural America's need for farm workers decreased, and some of those remaining on the land became underemployed due to rising mechanical efficiencies in agriculture. In Ford's mind, the problem was how to get people the money to buy some of the new necessities of life small-scale farming could not provide, without forcing them off the land and into unhealthy cities. His solution involved taking the factory to the country and allowing rural people to continue part-time farming, while earning decent wages in Ford's

decentralized plants. Thus, Ford's diagnosis of American society bore striking similarities to the perceptions of government reformers like M. L. Wilson and Rexford Tugwell. But Ford's prescription for its ills diverged from their plans, the main difference involving Ford's placement of the decentralized factory at the center of his reform scheme. This was the only "planning" necessary, as the community would naturally take its strength from the synthesis of agriculture and industry. Ford proclaimed that "With one foot on the land and one foot in industry, America is safe." As Ford referred to them, the actual plan of "village industries" began to take shape in 1916 around dispersed, small-scale factories set in small towns and hamlets in the southeastern Michigan countryside.⁵³

Ford believed that his interest and efforts in decentralization were part of a growing national movement toward the establishment of increasing numbers of small cities, towns, and villages. While not rejecting completely large cities and large factory complexes (his River Rouge plant in Detroit was the largest factory in the world at the time) he reasoned that there need not be two distinct types of life in America, rural and urban-industrial, both of which suffered from a lack of what the other had. Rural areas were still the repositories of America's virtues and builders of character, while wanting for economic stability and adequate cash incomes. Urban areas seemed to provide the opportunities for abundant jobs and economic growth, but were the scene of social disorder, anomie, and dissolution. His revitalization program spoke to rural areas where he observed that the greatest strides toward modernism could be most easily accomplished. Rural dwellers could have access to the modern conveniences of urban life and leave behind much of the drudgery, cultural isolation, and poverty of farm life. The prototype of the village industries established at Nankin Mills in 1918, tended to confirm Ford's expectations about decentralism as a workable, pragmatic solution to the intertwining problems and interdependence of rural and urban socio-economic sectors. Nankin Mills became the model upon which seventeen village industrial plants were built over the next thirty years. Site selection proved to be based on Ford's personal

impulses, but usually involved old mill or factory grounds, on or near rivers where waterpower was available. Many abandoned or underused mill sites were renovated or slightly modified with substantial redevelopment of the dams, millraces, and hydropower equipment.⁵⁴

Although the village industries concept never became an officially organized company program, nor was guided by a set of published principles, it became apparent through a myriad of press releases, company publications, radio talks, and speeches that Ford clearly had a well-developed idea for social reform. He wanted to merge the best attributes of technology, the modern factory, and agricultural lifestyles into a new cultural environment, which while not revolutionary, would elicit a better life and a new community vigor for rural areas. From a purely business standpoint, industrial decentralization also made sense, because costs were lower in rural areas and labor supplies were plentiful. Ford pledged, however, to pay village industry workers the same wages as his trend-setting urban workers, and he did. If possible, he directed that only unemployed workers be given the new jobs, so as not to compete unfairly with the local labor market. Ideally, farmers were to be given preference in hiring and their employment made flexible to fit into the demands of the farming cycle. During planting and harvest seasons, the village industries would run on shorter hours with fewer workers, or close entirely. Village industries would take maximum advantage of hydropower sources not only to save on fuel costs Ford believed were too high, but because such plants fit in with his vision of a nineteenth-century harmony of agricultural, commercial, industrial, and environmental interests. As such, the village industries were to be integral components of the larger Ford production system. The decentralized factories were all located within a sixty mile radius of Detroit so that their light sub-assemblies could be trucked daily to the main assembly plants of River Rouge and Highland Park. Quality control was held to the same rigorous standards as conventional plants, and workers were

taught significant skills, thus becoming valuable parts of the overall company production system.⁵⁵

Initially, village industry workers were encouraged to till plots of land. Ford believed that ownership of land provided for a type of insurance against misfortune. As time went by, fewer Ford workers continued as active farmers, but the work force as a whole remained composed of rural or small town residents. After a few years of Ford's village industry experiments, popularity of the idea was so great that locales eagerly sought his favor in *establishing new decentralized factories in their midst*. Evidence indicates that Ford intended to continue expanding the number of small factory sites, even to overseas areas. As part of a larger village industries program, Michigan alone was reported to be the eventual home of fifty sites. An expanded village industries program was just one aspect of a three pronged assault on the nation's problems, especially the demise of rural strength, economic diversity, and moral authority. Ford backed the notion of farm chemurgic as a way to bolster the farm economy and rid the countryside of excess crop production. He supported the construction of several soybean processing mills to produce the raw materials for plastic parts in his cars. He also used other natural and agricultural commodities such as corn, cotton, livestock, and wood to produce a variety of industrial products like glues, dyes, solvents, oils, leathers, and other fluids. This was another way to join agriculture and industry into a harmonious whole, thus benefiting the small community in the process. The third aspect of rural revitalization centered around Ford's "Industrialized American Barn," which was an idea to utilize vacant or dilapidated rural structures like barns to serve as initial processing sites of agricultural raw materials. Several of the soybean processing plants fit this description. The village industries remained, however, the central part of Ford's philosophy of rural revitalization. Several of the factories were so successful, or their manufactures were so in demand that they often outgrew their hydropower sources, necessitating the installation of steam generators. Yet, Ford directed that the hydropower

setups continue to be used and maintained and that all of the factories—even those employing more than 500 workers (Flat Rock, 500; Ypsilanti, 738)—remain in the village industries system. Many sites entailed substantial investment by Ford in plant, equipment, dam refurbishment, water systems, and in some cases, rural electricity, company stores, and even schools. Ford did not intend to build utopian communities, but saw the benefits of well-rounded, materially healthy communities.⁵⁶

Although Ford's understanding of regionalism did not rise to a Mumford's theoretical heights, he did envision regionalism in the sense of a series of small towns interconnected by and to larger industrial systems, but retaining their viability and individual identities by linking their fortunes to the land and their local factories. Ford's basic concern was with small, agrarian places. His village industries were not envisioned to change the fundamental nature of village life, but to sustain and ameliorate it. He eschewed a position of paternalism or dominance in the small towns selected for local factories, although he easily could have taken a proprietary stance. Ford refused to impose on locales, but helped out when asked because he wanted his plants to be part of the community and to be means toward economic improvement. Most of the services he provided were not free, but were always low-cost. Despite his often contradictory ideas and public statements on a wide variety of subjects, it is clear that Ford wanted his village industries to function as catalysts for the creation of a new more balanced community and society, characterized by a greater stability, security, and prosperity for urban and rural people alike. His vision of community partook not of escape or cooperative utopias or new towns, but the preservation of traditional rural areas and small towns in a technological age. Ford disagreed with the idea of new towns altogether. He feared an influx of urbanites into country areas and the possible "contamination" of traditional agrarian society with urban values and all the disruptions implied by that phenomenon. He questioned the wisdom of starting new communities which would compete with the extant rural places. He believed that *greenbelt* communities were exclusive and

separatist, and that unwarranted government involvement was sure to follow their establishment. Despite his utterances against government planning, administrators like Harry Hopkins and Rexford Tugwell found much of Ford's emphasis on decentralization to their liking. Ford's village industries, however, paralleled much more closely the intentions of Arthur Morgan and his ideas for the TVA and the transformation of conditions in rural communities. Yet, decentralization was not a panacea for Ford, because he believed that not all industrial processes were equally conducive to down-sizing. Technology was best when guided, not resisted. Technology as utilized in some processes of centralization, was part of the system, which would function best when all the parts--rural villages, towns, cities, and suburbs--fulfilled their respective roles.⁵⁷

Ford realized the value of both technology and community, and accommodated himself to them, no matter how unorthodox or unsystematic his schemes or how mixed his motivations. He had the utopians' hope and faith in the basic goodness of human beings and the rightness of their enterprise, yet he manifested the acute pragmatism of the astute businessperson. He really believed that the small community was important; he observed that "It was an evil day when the village flour mill disappeared." But he remained determined and confident in his resolve to see a way to the realization of a modern, technologically sophisticated and well-off village life that would make sense of a world that was changing just a bit too fast. Ford's village industries came out his "inventor's workshop," by which he meant that others could easily come to this point in their thought, if they would just be practical and solved both engineering and social problems simultaneously. Beyond Ford himself, his press specialists, and some former members of the RPAA, very few people took notice of the village industries after 1945. Henry Ford relinquished the presidency of the Ford Motor Company at that date, and subsequent company leaders phased out all but one village industry. The Ypsilanti plant still operates today, but as a part of a larger facility built in 1947. The Ford Motor Company even used the slogan "1st to Demonstrate True

Decentralization" in their ad copies in large circulation weeklies during the mid-1940s. Whether this indicated a new general awareness of the phenomenon is difficult to say. Clearly, Henry Ford anticipated the type of industrial decentralization which has brought relatively small factories to rural America in the latter part of the twentieth century, which in its turn has helped to keep some small towns alive and provide a greater degree of independence for rural wage earners. As much as Russian Peter Kropotkin of Fields, Factories and Workshops notoriety, Patrick Geddes, or Mumford, Henry Ford spoke to a way to achieve the benefits of the small community in the midst of a burgeoning mass society. It was not the rewards of either bigness or smallness which Ford sought, but an elusive balance which itself would help create new cultural places in which community could grow, experiment, and flourish. Perhaps, then, Ford's village industries represent another road not taken by America, in addition to most or all of those cultural paths already mentioned in this review analysis.⁵⁸

Ford's ideas for industrial villages never fully partook of either the agrarian vision or Mumford's more urban-oriented, light-industrial, greenbelt city. Ford's village experiments had some utopian overtones, but were never particularly institutionally reformist because there was no basic social unit that he wanted to change; the rural village was his focus, but he did not want it altered, only augmented. Thus, lacking in connections to the plans of other reformers, Ford's village industries scheme tended to become a communitarian orphan. Yet, other reformist and fundamentalist myths were still potent, such as agrarianism. When tied directly to establishment of new communities, agrarianism manifested itself in a new cultural incarnation--the Christian-sponsored subsistence homestead.

Although agrarianism had its roots in a deep conservatism, especially that of the Southern Agrarians, the agrarian message (in the guise of the back-to-the-land movement) was repeated and elaborated enough throughout the 1930s so that it became a radical, even left-of-center program of social reform and action in the appropriate hands. For example, it

was not much of a step from a mainstream agrarianism like that of Troy Cauley, to proposals for the development of full-fledged subsistence homestead communities by the Catholic rural life movement, Protestant rural life movement, and others. Originally conceived as an antidote to unemployment and relief by both the federal government and private groups like the Quakers, the concept of subsistence homesteads took on a spiritualized community dimension in Rural Roads to Security: America's Third Struggle for Freedom (1940), written by Catholic ruralists and priests Luigi Ligutti and John Rawe.

Ligutti, an ardent back-to-the-lander, was heavily involved in the Iowa subsistence project at Granger Homesteads. He used that experience when he and Rawe wrote of the evils of the dominant society, the problems of the movement, and the promise of that particular homestead project in strident, exasperated, yet hopeful terms: "Our rural technique is not the technique which the husbandman practices. We are soil miners, . . . not soil biologists. What could easily have endured as a nation of secure and free, landowning people, through an intelligent 'agriculture' on our two billion acres, has become a nation of servile dependents on a mechanistic plutocracy, inefficient and exploitive."⁵⁹

Ligutti's vision for subsistence homesteads soared to utopian heights because he believed that they had the potential to undercut all the extremes of industrial life-- individualism, materialism, determinism, and the anomie, anonymity, and transience of urban life. Food-processing homesteads, as part of larger cooperatives, would buttress the functions of the family. They would constitute new natural groups which would combine the best attributes of the country and the city. For instance, part-time farming could be coupled with day jobs in nearby towns and cities. Speaking for the Agrarian Rural Life Conferences, Ligutti did not recommend a revolt against all mass production, but simply proposed increasing self-sufficiency to a point where it allowed a substantial degree of control over life, and provided a modicum of stability to both individual families and whole communities.

These subsistence homesteads, then, were seen as permanent solutions to the particular problems created by modern industrialism.⁶⁰

The importance of these concerns for rural America was enough even before the Depression for a group of Catholics led by Father Edwin V. O'Hara to found the National Catholic Rural Life Conference (NCRLC) in 1923. Rural Catholic leaders worried about the growing urbanist orientation of both the Catholic Church and American society in general. Catholic agrarians, aided by some within the Catholic worker movement, exhibited their greatest strength in the Midwest. Their message reiterated the agrarian myth which laid almost all of the blame for the nation's problems at the doorstep of urban civilization and found all of America's remaining goodness and strength in the stalwart moral, spiritual, and family bonds extant in the rural society of yeoman farmers and hardworking small townspeople. The farmer not only produced food and fiber, but highly principled and moral replacements for urban populations which could not maintain their own numbers. Rural society provided the rudder for the entire nation, steering it safely through the rocky shoals of radicalism, materialism, corruption, and dissolution.⁶¹

Catholic agrarianism offered a neo-Jeffersonian, distributist-like cure for what ailed America in the form of a large landowning rural population. The land would inevitably make better people who would naturally resist extreme ideologies: as Ligutti told a congressional committee, the "only cure for communism, the real cure for communism, [is] to have every family own a cow." Furthermore, a life close to the soil and nature would guard against extreme secularization.⁶²

Most people understood that the job of the church was made infinitely more difficult because of poverty and misery created by the Depression. By 1935, the head of the Rural Life Bureau, Father Edgar Schmiedeler, perceived an imbalance between the country and city in terms of wealth and the potential for prosperity. Only the federal government had the power to even this gap by direct aid to farmers, lower tariffs, and the restoration of free trade

and fair prices. When the Agricultural Adjustment Act and the Farm Credit Administration came along, the Catholic agrarians welcomed them. But it quickly became apparent to the ruralists by the end of the 1930s that the New Deal agricultural program would not substantially reduce tenancy or do more than just tinker with rural society. Not willing to accept government paternalism, but skeptical about the motives and effectiveness of farm programs, they found themselves staring at government bureaucrats across an ideological and programmatic abyss.⁶³

Rather than the government step in and actually run programs designed to help rural people, Catholic agrarians believed the government's abilities would best be utilized by its assistance to self-help organizations like subsistence homestead communities, credit unions, guilds, and cooperatives. Publicly-financed rural housing was also touted as a method by which families could experience the benefits of home ownership, homesteading, and cooperation. John Rawe proclaimed that "every housing program should be a homestead program. Nothing prevents the successful combination of industrial wages earning and part-time farming today serve a certain spirit of narrow urban industrialism . . . and a want of democratic vision."⁶⁴

One housing program in particular intrigued Catholic agrarians. They saw the subsistence homesteads concept promulgated by M. L. Wilson as an ideal vehicle for the rebuilding of rural communities. One Catholic rural leader in particular made use of the opportunity afforded by the Federal Subsistence Homestead Corporation. Reverend Luigi Ligutti applied for assistance in 1933, to sponsor a part-time farming community for underemployed coal mining families near Granger, Iowa. Ligutti identified their problems clearly as "ill-kept houses and yards, dirt and grime, impassable streets, and unsanitary, unhealthy living conditions. The camps consist of overcrowded four-room dwellings, where truancy, delinquency, and a low standard of living prevail."⁶⁵

The government-approved Granger Plan called for the relocation of fifty families to five-acre plots of tillable land each, near churches and schools, but not too far from the mines. Each family was carefully screened for evidence of a steady income, moral rectitude, and a desire to own and develop a homestead. The project received endorsements from the Catholic hierarchy, as well as a wide variety of Iowans including elected officials, labor leaders, and mine owners. In December, 1935, the new residents occupied their completed houses. They proceeded to develop two cooperatives, a credit union, and a communal canning operation; the government chipped in with a community center. Ligutti's plans for a factory or cooperative farm, however, never materialized. The credit union continued into the 1950s, while the community remained stable and became more thoroughly integrated into the nearby town of Granger.⁶⁶

Granger Homesteads benefited immensely from its able and dedicated local sponsorship, particularly the leadership of Ligutti, and became one of the most successful of all the federal homestead projects. Ligutti aided the residents in making part-time farming a reality, whereas subsistence homesteaders in other projects curtailed gardening and subsistence activities early in their histories. Despite the positive outcome of the Granger experiment, Catholic agrarians criticized other subsistence projects for their irrelevance to the agrarian predicament. Federalization of the projects also aroused the ire of local sponsors who complained about the excessive bureaucracy and inflexibility of the federal government. In addition, they believed the program was much too small to be anything more than a laboratory experiment. Finally, the Granger "laboratory" demonstrated that the fate of alternative communities often hinges on the commitment to a consistent community vision, dedicated leadership, and thorough-going educative efforts to allow members the opportunity to understand and participate in that vision. In its elaboration of that vision, the NCRLC espoused one of the most comprehensive and cohesive perspectives on the small community for that time, and has continued that stance into the present.⁶⁷

One of the common themes underlying many of the beliefs of small community advocates was the urge to get "back to the land." Agrarians of all types generally supported the position. Others who backed ideas and schemes to relocate population onto the land included the decentralists, some regionalists, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, some government policy makers like M. L. Wilson and Federal Farm Board economist, John D. Black, modern homesteaders, and a variety of single-issue proponents and outright fanatics who called for everything from Henry George's single-tax theory to establishment of farm colonies, to the federal government giving away the land it owned to the impoverished seekers of land and independence. Even as governor and then president, Franklin Roosevelt said on a number of occasions how he desired that the nation boost its rural population, although not the number of farmers who already outproduced the available market for their crops. By the 1930s, he could point to the fact that the advantages of city life were comparatively less than at the beginning of the 1920s. The Great Depression created circumstances fairly unique in American history, and they were often responsible for a sizeable number of people returning to the land during the 1930s. Many of these people originally came from the country and found that cities with no jobs to be had were unbearable. No exact statistics exist for the number of people leaving cities for the land during that decade, but most authorities believed that reverse migration peaked in 1932 and then gradually declined for the rest of the decade.⁶⁸

The idea of living a simple existence in close proximity with the soil has of course underlaid much of American mythology, the frontier being one of the largest single repositories for such myths. Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the frontier largely made America the land of the free and the home of the brave. Arthur Bestor posited that the twenty years from 1830 to 1850 was the most intense period of utopian community building precisely because these first back-to-the-landers acted in a period of relative prosperity to set up communal structures essentially on the frontier where no one would bother them. While

the argument explains the Mormon settlement of Utah and a few other communistic community experiments, it does not adequately account for subsequent periods of communitarian activity and seems to question the validity of the modern utopian urge. Historian Robert Fogarty's recent work seems to successfully challenge the traditional conception of a distinct absence of either communitarian or utopian sentiments in the industrial age of 1860 to 1914. Communalism and back-to-the-land proposals continued unabated in good times and bad. The rate of settlement and colonization schemes actually increased after the Civil War, and included General Nathaniel Banks' congressional bill (1877) to form a private colonizing company financed by government credit. Massachusetts Representative, General Benjamin Butler, proposed in 1878, locating large numbers of settlers near army posts in the West. Most of the propositions for land settlement in the latter nineteenth century involved colonizing unsettled, but potentially tillable land.⁶⁹

By the turn of the twentieth century, most of the decent available land had been taken, but the federal government still possessed large amounts of land which people sought to occupy through expanded and special "modern" homesteading laws like the Kinkaid Act (1904), the Forest Homestead Act (1906), and the Stock Raising Homestead Act (1916). Also during this period the land was seen as a place which could cure some of the particular problems created by modern urban-industrial society, such as promoting the moral growth of children through a school garden movement around 1890, the concept of vacant lot cultivation in the nation's big cities, and the colonizing of the urban poor by the Salvation Army in the last decade of the nineteenth century. The early part of the twentieth century witnessed the growth of "a sort of national infatuation" with the idea of moving to the land. Bolton Hall's Three Acres and Liberty and A Little Land and a Living, popularized the benefits of rural living to the point of making it a fad. In the 1920s and 1930s, the complexion of the back-to-the-land movement changed to more of an escape from the city and a return to the imagined harmony inherent in the life on the land. The movement gained

the most interest from popular magazines which continually extolled the virtues of the country life. Foremost among these was Country Life in America, which published from 1900 to 1942. Much of the reporting and editorializing was rhetorically written, outright propaganda, which appealed much more to basic American individualism than the creation of community life. Nevertheless, among the deluge of articles promising utopian homesteads, the voice of publisher Bernarr Macfadden helped set the stage for a more extensive, organized program for getting people onto the land and helping them to take care of themselves. The bills pushed by Macfadden ultimately became the models for the subsistence homesteads legislation.⁷⁰

The 1920s and 1930s not only saw an outpouring of theoretical and ideational activity concerning the land, but the founding of a number of alternative, experimental communities to test and demonstrate the advantages of the modern homestead. Ralph Borsodi became the prime example of the modern homesteader, raising a variety of crops, gathering fuel from the forests, constructing buildings from native stone, using modern technology to ease the physical burdens and to provide more creature comforts, and developing and accumulating knowledge with crafts and survival skills, which he passed on to the members of his suburban homestead communities. Father Liguitti sponsored and acted as the guiding force in the subsistence homesteads community of Granger Homesteads near Des Moines, Iowa. He tirelessly advocated the right of property for all people, and in this he was joined by social critics as different as decentralist Herbert Agar, capitalist decentralist Henry I. Harriman, Henry Ford, and the executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, Clarence Pickett, who helped to create new community structures for displaced miners in the Appalachians. Finally, the importance of the relationship of people with the land, which was the essence of the back-to-the-land movement, can also be seen in the RPAA's construction of the modified garden towns of Sunnyside and Radburn, the

government's designs for the greenbelt towns, farming colonies, and subsistence homestead communities, and in the TVA's model town of Norris, Tennessee.⁷¹

As the small town was replaced by the urban center as the dominant locus of cultural construction in the early part of the twentieth century, various groups of intellectuals responded to the perceived threat against the very fabric of American society by identifying that threat, critiquing it, and offering up alternative paths of change and institutional realities. In the 1920s and 1930s the dominant cultural paradigm came to be increasingly opposed by a tremendous variety of reformers, some of whom based their hopes and dreams on the concept of the "small community" as the means by which American society could not only be reformed, but transformed into a new near-utopian, if not perfect social order. Thus, while small community advocates offered a coherent, sweeping program of reformist change, they constituted only a small position in the larger minority opposition movement, referred to as Independent Liberalism by historian R. Alan Lawson, where they sometimes found themselves ironically inhabiting similar intellectual ground with socialists, libertarians, laissez-faire capitalists, conservatives of many stripes, reactionaries, and even neo-fascists. Of course, the dominant cultural paradigm itself was undergoing something of a revolution toward becoming the mixed welfare, corporate, capitalist state.⁷²

Nascent small community proponents began to emerge during this period, and gained some publicity, attracted a few followers, and helped carry through some private and public reform programs, but generally their influence was muted already by 1940, when America's consumption with World War II began to take shape. Their hopes for a peaceful cultural revolution with the small community as its vital core began to give way to a stance which did not directly challenge the historical flow of American society so much, but hoped to direct and guide that cultural stream toward the goal of aiding and supporting the small community in ways less radical and threatening to the established system. Small community advocates, however, did not abandon their fundamental themes such as agrarianism, regionalism,

decentralization, planning, and human ecology, but strove to modulate their message along lines less in outright rejection of modern society and more toward a role of constructive criticism. For example, economist David Cushman Coyle, long sympathetic to the small community cause, argued in 1940 that American society did not need another back-to-the-land population movement so much as balanced development which avoided the extremes of too little or too much concentration. Too much concentration promoted slums, high taxes, crime, disease, and mental breakdown, while too little centralization failed to provide most of the civilized institutions that modern Americans required. He defined community as "a local group of people who can go to a common center for some or all of their organized services--stores, schools, churches, libraries, movies, and medical and legal institutions." For Cushman, this necessitated an ideal town sized of not less than 10,000 people. Furthermore, while continued growth was generally of marginal utility and created exaggerated costs because everything had to be transported longer distances, decentralization should be promoted by creating more local self-reliance, encouraging the growth of small industry, and advocacy of the buy-at-home spirit. Such was one of the more moderate positions promulgated by most small community advocates during the early 1940s, as the needs of the war came to color the intellectual landscape almost completely. Seemingly, the time for creation of experimental, utopian small communities was over, at least temporarily, as American ingenuity and wealth was poured into more pressing areas of activity. Yet, as the social climate blunted communitarians' expectations, the perennial promise of their ideals like regionalism and decentralization kept up their hopes of possible evolutionary change toward more of a town-based society.⁷³

NOTES

1. Herbert Agar, "But Can it be Done?," in Who Owns America?, ed. Herbert Agar and Allen Tate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936), 103.
2. Clifford B. Anderson, "The Metamorphosis of American Agrarian Idealism in the 1920's and 1930's," Agricultural History 35 (October 1961): 182-188; Paul H. Johnstone, "Old Ideals Versus new Ideas in Farm Life," in Farmers in a Changing World (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1940):116-118.
3. Lewis Atherton, Main Street on the Middle Border (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1954); Richard Lingeman, Small Town America: A Narrative History, 1620-The Present (New York: G. P. Putnum, 1980), 364-391.
4. Twelve Southerners, I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition, with a forward by Louis D. Rubin, Jr. (New York: Harper & Row, 1962, 1930), vi-xviii; William C. Havard and Walter Sullivan, eds., A Band of Prophets: The Vanderbilt Agrarians After Fifty Years (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 1-5; Alexander Karanikas, Tillers of a Myth: Southern Agrarians as Social and Literary Critics (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 6-8. Louis D. Rubin, Jr., forward to I'll Take My Stand, vii, xi, xiv; Twelve Southerners, xix.
5. Twelve Southerners, xix; George M. Lubick, "Restoring the American Dream: The Agrarian-Decentralist Movement, 1930-1946," The South Atlantic Quarterly 84 (Winter 1985): 64; Karanikas, 7-8, 24; Lytle quoted in Rubin's forward to I'll Take My Stand, xiv.
6. Karanikas, 25-29; Twelve Southerners, xxiii; Edward Shapiro, "The Southern Agrarians and the Tennessee Valley Authority," American Quarterly 22 (1970): 805.
7. Twelve Southerners, xxii-xxiii; Lyle H. Lanier, "Big Business in the Property State," in Who Owns America?, ed. Herbert Agar and Allen Tate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936), 27.
8. Karanikas, 37; Havard and Sullivan, A Band of Prophets, 4, 8.
9. Karanikas, 35-44, 48; Troy J. Cauley, Agrarianism: A Program for Farmers (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1935), 117.

10. Twelve Southerners, xxi, xxviii-xxx.
11. Lubick, 64; William Leverette, Jr. and David E. Shi, "Herbert Agar and Free America: A Jeffersonian Alternative to the New Deal," Journal of American Studies 16 (1982): 189-206.
12. Agar won the 1934 Pulitzer Prize in American history for his The Peoples' Choice, From Washington to Harding: A Study in Politics (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933). William E. Leverette, Jr. and David E. Shi, "Agrarianism for Commuters," The South Atlantic Quarterly 79 (Spring 1980): 204; Lubick, 73; David Cushman Coyle, "The Fallacy of Mass Production," in Who Owns America?, ed. Herbert Agar and Allen Tate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1936), 3; Edward S. Shapiro, "Decentralist Intellectuals and the New Deal," Journal of American History 58 (1972): 941.
13. Richard H. Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams: Culture and Social Thought in the Depression Years (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 100-103; David B. Danbom, "Romantic Agrarianism in Twentieth-Century America," Agricultural History 65, no. 4 (Fall 1991): 6.
14. Lubick, 74-75; Edward S. Shapiro, "American Conservative Intellectuals, the 1930's, and the Crisis of Ideology," Modern Age 23, no. 4 (Fall 1979): 373.
15. Lubick, 67-68; Leverette and Shi, "Herbert Agar and Free America," 192-197.
16. Shapiro, "Decentralist Intellectuals," 944-946; Lubick, 70-71.
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32. Appropriation Statement, 1933, folder 4814, box 407, series 200, Record Group 1.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, North Tarrytown, New York (hereafter designated RAC); Digest of TVA, 1933, folder 4816, box 407, series 200, RG 1.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC; Grant's Report on TVA, 1934, folder 4819, box 407, series 200, RG 1.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, RAC.

33. Roy Talbert, Jr., FDR's Utopian: Arthur Morgan of the TVA (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1987), A. Morgan quote on 111, 111-114.

34. McDonald and Muldowny, 218.

35. Callahan, 30-39; McDonald and Muldowny, 217-225; Talbert, 118.

36. Callahan, 36-37; McDonald and Muldowny, 225-23; Talbert, 120-122.

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38. See Talbert for an excellent discussion of A. Morgan's utopian vision, especially 122-129. Philip Selznick's point of cooptation of its opposition is well taken on the TVA's agricultural programs, but seems less valuable in the core activities like power, navigation, and flood control, in his TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949). Even Selznick seems to limit his conclusion: "It is just because the TVA stands as something of a shining example of

incorruptibility in such major matters as noncapitulation to local political interests in the hiring of personnel or to local utility interests in public power policy that the evidence of covert cooptation in the agricultural program attains its general significance" (266). For Lilienthal's vision see his TVA: Democracy on the March (New York: Harper, 1953). The Morgan-Lilienthal struggle is best observed through Thomas K. McCraw's Morgan vs. Lilienthal: The Feud Within the TVA (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1970).

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CHAPTER 3

REGIONALISM AND THE SMALL COMMUNITY

Of all the ideological themes called into service as foci for the revisioning of the small community in the 1920s and 1930s, regionalism was one rallying cry which could serve most of the diverse needs of a whole range of groups, including agrarians, decentralists, planners, social ecologists, back-to-the-landers, and selective modern technologists like Henry Ford, or even the brilliant eccentric Buckminster Fuller, inventor of the geodesic dome. In an era of rapid and dramatic change called forth in part due to the twin emergencies of the Great Depression and the approach of World War II, "cultural revolutionaries" of the small community variety saw the regional perspective as a social imperative and as a way to tip the cultural balance back toward the locale and away from the territorial, or national level. In a 1931 review of Southwestern folklorist B. A. Botkin's book Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany, Lewis Mumford was confident "that regionalism was not a lost cause or an archaic wish, but a contemporary fact that must be assimilated and consciously directed." Yet, over the course of the ensuing decade, regionalist advocates became hard pressed to deliver on their intention to lead America in a cultural revolution based on the idyllic, organic regional community. This was true in spite of the extensive, insightful, and provocative body of lasting regionalist cultural artistry produced by a variety of creative talents in an equally wide range of media. Historian Robert Dorman observed that "Among them were the histories of Webb and Mumford; the paintings of Benton and O'Keefe; the poetry of Frost and Tate himself; the photography of Lange, Evans, and Bourke-White; the novels of Faulkner, Steinbeck, Cather, and Wolfe; the folklore of Botkin and Rourke; the music of Copland and Guthrie; the sociology of Agee and Cash [and] even the Agrarians'

own manifesto [I'll Take My Stand]." Even so, Pacific Coast regionalist and agricultural observer Carey McWilliams all but admitted defeat for the movement as early as 1942, in the conclusion to his critique of industrial agriculture and migrant labor, Ill Fares the Land. He said it was "rather idle to speculate at the moment about ideal patterns of rural social relationships or idyllic rural utopias." The cultural climate was such that these experiments would be overwhelmed by hostile forces. Thus McWilliams observed dimly that "there is, in fact, no 'solution' of this problem." The only possible hope was a full scale democratic revolution, which would topple the "chariot of industrial domination" run by a small oligarchy; he gave few details about this necessary transformation and said little more on the subject.¹

Regionalism continued to struggle on, but its supporting coalition narrowed and a new generation of followers failed to materialize. Indeed, most radical cultural alternatives seemed to founder on the new demands and priorities of World War II. Problems of production, logistics, and speed occupied Americans; compared to these the radicals' schemes seemed unnecessarily idealistic, impractical, and less than urgent. In response, small community advocates became less "single-issue" oriented, stressing a "hybridized" message--a vision of social change which attempted to integrate extant general community themes more completely than had most of the previous leading groups--and recognizing the inherent complications posed by an interdependent mass society. For example, two plans of many which emerged in late 1930s emphasized the intersection of regionalism, planning, decentralization, and selective modern technology, a mix very similar to that of the TVA, but with less interest in what turned out to be its prime functions of power production, flood control, and navigation improvement. David Cushman Coyle's Roads to a New America (1938) and Ralph L. Wood's America Reborn: A Plan for Decentralization of Industry (1939) both offered more generic programs for community renewal based on structural rearrangements in the economy rather than ideological transformations in the culture. In this

sense, the definition of regionalism had already been shifted from the primacy of the organic community to that of a technique which scientists and planners could use to match the proper economic developmental mechanisms to the appropriate environment. Regional proponents of the organic community variety failed to stem the tide toward modernism, moderation, and the redefinition of their very movement. Likewise, they were unable to generate new support from either of the political (cultural) fringes from where much of their creative energy had previously come. Former regionalist voices either moved on to other pursuits like Herbert Agar, became silent, or sputtered ineffectually from the political extremes. After the 1938 publication of his book The Attack on Leviathan, Donald Davidson, for one, ranted and raved from an evermore rightist position so that he ceased to be a spokesperson for any recognizably progressive regionalist ideology. In reaction to Roads to a New America, Davidson quite expectedly wrote that "Mr. Coyle, the genial engineer, innocently assumes that the democratic virtues will continue to operate unimpaired even though the government be strongly centralized." The regionalist movement of the 1920s and 1930s had gathered under its umbrella the likes of Davidson, Mumford, and Arthur Morgan. But by the 1940s, the umbrella leaked badly, and often lacked someone to hold it up in a storm. If regionalism, as the champion of the organic community, did not die out completely, it largely disappeared from public view as Dorman and fellow historian John Thomas maintain. But that aspect of regionalism concerned with how communities and areas fit into the larger cultural network--as symbolized by the American nation-state--did survive and even briefly flourished in the 1940s and early 1950s, under the guidance of a group we will call the institutional regionalists. Then as the appeal of regionalism flickered out, its locale component was incorporated into the community development perspective. The few remaining advocates of the organic community went "underground," if not quite literally, then in the sense that their subject matter was marginalized and only publicly discussed on the fringes of literate society. A few notable exceptions existed, like educator and philosopher Baker Brownell and Arthur

Morgan, but they could be conveniently dismissed as utopians, or ignored along with assorted old-fashioned agrarians and iconoclastic small-town enthusiasts.²

What could not be easily passed by or overlooked was the reality of the cultural revolution which took place in the United States during the 1930s and the early 1940s. The Great Depression and World War II were cultural phenomena which posed a significant challenge to American civilization, and precipitated conditions conducive to the overthrow of the dominant cultural paradigm, the predominantly laissez-faire capitalist system operating in a growing urban-industrial society. It was supplanted by the managerial-corporate state, the winner in a sea of competing systems designed to deal with the demands and problems of a new, truly mass society. The public and private architects of the new dominant cultural paradigm utilized large, centralized, bureaucratic institutions to integrate an extensive nation of diverse religions, races, ethnic groups, socio-economic classes, and physio-cultural regions into a national whole. Even some small community regionalist proponents were partially caught up in the perceived need to adjust to the new instrumentalities of the modern mass society. The notion of development, for one, even appeared in the pages of that quintessentially "organic community" magazine Free America. An article in 1938, pointed to the "North Carolina Piedmont [as being] in perfect position to demonstrate proper methods and courses of decentralized growth to areas just beginning to industrialize."³

But it was the institutional regionalists who took this concern with growth and development and expanded it beyond its basic economic implications to include the notion of cultural growth, elaboration, maturity, solidarity, and stability. In the early 1940s, the Rockefeller Foundation (RF) emerged as one of the main institutional leaders of an effort to consolidate and solidify the cultural strength and integrity of the largest mass society and most powerful democracy in the world. Realizing that the United States was stepping into a larger role in the world at war, the RF wanted America to identify its diverse past, and how it

contributed to its present national character and as a base for future growth and change. Raymond Fosdick, president of the RF during this time, gave perspective to this concern in retrospect: "The culture of one world in the making is necessarily compounded of the diverse contributions of many peoples. Until a nation understands itself in relation to its own culture, it cannot intelligently harmonize and integrate its life into the larger pattern." The officers of the RF, especially those in the Humanities Division, focused on the classificatory concept and social instrumentality of regionalism as a means by which they could help direct scholarship, education, and even the American national consciousness away from the study of antiquities (where much grant money had formerly gone) toward the creation of an American studies deemed much more relevant and critical in a very dangerous and uncertain world. The RF recognized the increasing "smallness" of the world; it realized that more contact with other cultures was necessary, and believed that a new regional awareness of Americans' roots would allow nations and people to see common ground among them. Regionalism would help understanding of peoples' "origins." As the 1941 annual report stated, "This attachment of meaning to a particular background through literature or art has no relation to a 'nationalism' or 'Americanism.' In fact, it may have much to do with internationalism by making men of every race realize the special possessions of individuals and groups by virtue of their regional origins."⁴

Along with many other thoughtful people and institutions, the RF believed that it was important to be more prepared for the end of World War II than America had been at the close of World War I. Part of this effort entailed providing places for the creation and classification of "ordered knowledge," because social science then appeared to be a tool which could help to "untangle the skein of cause and effect in human affairs." Much had been accomplished in this institutional endeavor, as the RF could point proudly to itself, the Brookings Institute, the Social Science Research Council, and the Institute of Pacific Relations among others. The RF had appropriated millions of dollars over the years since its

inception in 1913, and its officers believed it and the world were reaping the benefits of those expenditures in terms of expanding knowledge and organizational expertise that would see the world through the war and then allow countries to confidently face the grim post-war realities. Finding a lack of scholarship in American cultural history, the RF decided to play a strategic role as a catalyst in the production of greater knowledge of and participation in a shared American culture. If there was one field of study which would serve that purpose it was the humanities, because it gave value, purpose, and direction to peoples' lives, especially at a time and in a world constantly able or eager to undercut them. RF President Fosdick underscored this sentiment: "It is they [humanists] who really construct the world we live in, and it is they who with sensitive awareness to human perplexity and aspiration and with the power of imaginative presentation can speak effectively to a distracted world."⁵

The tone of the 1942 RF Annual Report became more urgent as Fosdick identified progress in the humanities as imperative because no one wanted to win the war, but lose those cultural values which made the United States strong and essentially good. He believed that the humanities were overshadowed in schools and elsewhere by the stress on military and technology subjects. He worried about losing the humanity of a generation, and he called for institutions to aid the humanities to keep "barbarism" at bay. He talked about universities as being the "custodian[s] of our cultural heritage," and equated freedom of universities to democratic freedom--a faith for which it was worth fighting. Citing the increasing importance of regions in the world structure and rising emphasis on the interpretation of North American areas of life, the RF launched an expanded program of grants in the humanities for regional studies beginning in 1942, with six conferences in three regions, the St. Lawrence River Valley, the Great Plains, and maritime New England and Canada. Its aim was to discover who could best "encourage native growth," how it should be done, and how humanists could help? Although the small community was at first seldom referred to by name within this "second" developing regional discourse, its significance was

implicit in the emphasis laid on the region, and by necessity, the locale as objects of study. It is clear that the prime agents of cultural construction in America at or before mid-century were large institutional entities, who in this case sought a new balance between locale and territory to aid in defining the emerging cultural order. Liberal institutions such as the RF eagerly embraced American diversity and pluralism, not seeking to change the components themselves, but to bring them together in a new usable and workable cultural synthesis.⁶

December 1941, not only marked the United States' entry into the war, but also the beginning of the RF's regional studies concerning the cultural tradition of North America. From the outset the program was acknowledged to be experimental, but its officers reasoned that: "The Foundation, under its program in the Humanities, has an opportunity to assist in bringing about a wider appreciation of American tradition. The basis of that appreciation has already been laid by scholars in the humanities and the social sciences, but interpretation is required before materials can be effectively used to widen appreciation through print, radio, and motion pictures. . . .the regional approach is one likely to give research and teaching new perspective, and so exert an enlivening influence." Director of the RF Humanities Division David Stevens and assistant John Marshall further confirmed the appropriateness of the regional approach by touring the United States, Canada, and Mexico in early 1942. They were struck by the degree of differences in physical environments, rituals, customs, traditions, and cultural heritages throughout the Americas. Yet they believed that the North American continent composed a natural unity and that its peoples should participate in a collective culture, a common identity built up of a network of regional experiences. By region, they meant "the largest grouping of [people] whose outlook is predominantly the same." Furthermore, this program should be run on a multidisciplinary basis because "the social scientist may have as much to contribute as the humanist." Finally, the general objectives of the regional studies were to: "define an approach to the problem of regional

studies; uncover and preserve good source materials; give wider appreciation of a region by making a useful interpretation of material; develop a consciousness of common heritage."⁷

The RF's position of leadership in the regional approach to American studies--by extension, the small community--was confirmed by the particular success of one of three early conferences arranged by Stevens and Marshall. Twelve delegates with a variety of interests and backgrounds gathered in New York City for the Great Plains Conference on April 17-18, 1942. Participants included Walter Prescott Webb, historian Henry Steele Commager, and sociologist Rupert Vance. The Great Plains was selected for the following reasons: "It was a distinct area; it was one of the more neglected areas, where very little had been done to encourage the humanities, so it presented a challenge--How could the lives of the common people on the plains be made richer and more interesting to themselves?; it was so recently settled that it presented an opportunity from a historical point of view which no other region in the United States could offer." In addition, the conference noted that the physical environment of the Great Plains posed a distinct challenge to settlement, and that the evolving culture had to adjust to the area's demanding physical ecology. Plains' people had often overlooked this fact, causing "serious difficulties in the past." Although the conference only dealt with general questions and proposals, it recommended that a second conference be held in the actual region of concern and that the area of study be limited to the Northern Great Plains. It further directed that George Smith of the University of Alberta undertake a survey of the region to determine the extent of "regional consciousness" and associated "works in progress," primarily in the region's universities.⁸

Smith's survey was a small episode in the evolution of the Northern Great Plains Studies, but it was indicative of the complexities of regional study and the difficulties in deciding what regionalism meant, and how it should best be represented and expressed. Marshall directed Smith to visit various Plains' universities in order to observe what resources they had to study the Plains way of life. Smith expressed some uncertainty about

exactly what he was to do, but proceeded to begin cataloguing resources for improving rural life in the plains. Meanwhile, the Conference on the Northern Plains convened at Lincoln, Nebraska on June 25-27, 1942. The RF sought more direct input from actual residents of the area and information on how to proceed in further study of "real homogeneity in the region." Stevens summarized RF's objectives this way: "We are in a smaller area, the northern plains area, where, we believe there is an active consciousness of the past and the present and the relation of the past to the present. We hope to find ways to describe what people live by, what they live by now and how men like yourselves can help the younger generation and the rest of the world to look at this area to understand what it symbolizes in American life." In order to more fully understand the regional mentality of the plains' people, the conference decided to pursue further study through the university extension services, and appointed the director of the extension service at the University of Manitoba, Watson Thomson, to direct the study. Thomson described adult education as "not the giving of instruction by those who know to those who do not. It is in its essence a co-operative business, a business of collective thinking and discussion And adult education is not technical or vocational. It is . . . political, i.e., concerned with the common life of the community, its inspiration and its organization." Smith had felt that he was to observe "facilities" for interpretation of life on the Plains, rather than either adjustment of communities or rural adult education. But after hearing Thomson's ideas and the drift of the conference toward the importance of individual understanding of and cooperative local participation in regionalism, Smith later began looking for evidence of community experiments in reform and development. He believed that his final report was a "rather bleak catalogue" of observations and that its only value to the Foundation was that of good will. One of Smith's conclusions, however, did prove helpful in later studies and projects. Because of the large size of the Plains and the fact that there was little cooperation within the area, he had reasoned that sub-regional studies would be more productive than whole region studies.⁹

But as Thomson pushed ahead with his project of describing the Plains' "outlook," he found, contrary to Smith, that the Northern Plains region was a manageable, coherent area based on climate, topography, economy, and even history. He included in the region the western two-thirds of Nebraska and the Dakotas, the northeastern corner of Colorado, the eastern part of Wyoming, the plains of Montana, and parts of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and a small, western corner of Manitoba--essentially the northern grasslands, characterized by semi-arid conditions. He based his efforts on the well-publicized report of President Roosevelt's Great Plains Committee, a response to the double-edged crisis of the Depression and the Dust Bowl, which together wreaked havoc on the entire Plains region. Depopulation, soil erosion, and social lethargy plagued the area, and even by 1942, the war economy had not brought the Plains back to a par with pre-Depression conditions. Thomson shared the conclusions of President Roosevelt, who, having received the report entitled "The Future of the Great Plains," on February 10, 1937, stated "that the problem of the Great Plains is not merely one of relief of a courageous and energetic people who have been stricken by several years of drought during a period of economic depression. It is much more fundamental than that. Depression and drought have only accentuated a situation which has been long developing The settlers brought with them agricultural practices developed in the more humid regions from which they came A new economy must be developed which is based on the conservation and effective utilization of all the water available, . . . and methods [appropriate] to natural conditions." Thomson represented those institutional regionalists, many of whom were educators and social scientists, who rejected both extreme solutions to the Plains' predicament; namely that they should either be largely depopulated in favor of grazing lands, parks, and wilderness areas or be developed along conventional lines requiring massive programs of dam building, irrigation works, and credit infusion. The regional orientation demanded an approach which cut between these extremes, but not necessarily a moderate one. The challenges faced by the Plains were staggering and the problems were

bigger than any one locale; Thomson noted that they "do not respect governmental boundaries."¹⁰

Thomson's work in surveying extension materials and methods designed to "give people of the Plains a better understanding of their local environment" as the RF characterized it, was supported by another precedent-setting document released by the federal government, this by the USDA entitled Water, Land, and People (1941). This report pointed out the need for more activist thinking on the part of planners, and the increasing importance of local, regional, state, and national interdependence. Agricultural observers realized that the Great Plains was not producing what it should for the war effort and now was the best time to plan for the post-war years. In addition, this region was the least understood by the rest of the nation, but it was physically more sensitive to ecological mistreatment. Thus, it was exceedingly important to immediately initiate the process of setting the Plains on a sound, balanced, lasting footing.¹¹

Meanwhile, Thomson enlisted the aid of Carl F. Kraenzel, a Montana State College rural sociologist and E. A. Corbett, Director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education to help him compile a document which would forcefully bring home to the people of the Northern Great Plains the urgent need for cultural change based on its inherent environmental limitations. The RF indicated it was excited about Thomson's work, but received alarms from Clyde Mckee, Dean of Agriculture at Montana State, about the youthful Kraenzel's radically-tinged publications and Corbett's fears that Kraenzel's writings would be examined by potential opponents of the developing study. But it soon became apparent that Thomson himself was no conservative, especially when he wrote to Marshall about the utopian potential of regionalism and cooperation in philosophic, even religious terms. Thomson placed great faith in the "planned and socialized New Democracy;" he wanted a new center for the region away from "dubious influences of these peripheral foci of

economic and political power like Minneapolis, Kansas City, or Denver." He also believed that people needed a written motivation to bring the above concept to fruition.¹²

The subsequent conference held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan on September 24-25, 1942, confirmed Thomson's hopes for the need of a forceful document setting forth the problems faced by the Northern Plains people and possible solutions to those cultural defects. The conference, made up of educators, social scientists, editors, government representatives, officials of farmers' cooperatives, and historians, unanimously supported the importance of the ideas of planning, the interdependence of regions, the need for cross-border cooperation, the dangers of centralization, and the need for people to participate first and foremost in their own communities. Finally, the conference directed that Thomson's study, The Northern Plains in a World of Change, be slightly revised and distributed on a limited basis to selected individuals and study groups throughout the region. Distribution would take place on an experimental basis through the Canadian Association for Adult Education and the Northern Great Plains Advisory Council, made up of the directors of Extension of the Northern Plains states. Recipients of the report were asked to provide detailed feedback on the usefulness of the document in adult education.¹³

First and foremost, the authors of The Northern Plains in a World of Change believed that they lived in an age of world revolution; that "Western civilization [was] undergoing a gradual transition and transformation, an important incident in which is the present war." Industrialization and urbanization had altered the face of Euro-American culture, commercial markets had become truly globalized, and worldwide economic and geo-political events no longer left places isolated and immune from change, sometimes abrupt and destabilizing. Apprehensive over the shape of things to come after the inevitable end to World War II, the authors set out to show that planning for peace was necessary before the war's conclusion. "The record of the First World War and its aftermath gives no absolute assurance that out of the Second World war will come those understandings needed for

building an orderly, satisfying and constructive future." This state of affairs could only come about "if we refuse to do what most people did in the other World War--pass on to another time ('When the war's over') and to another set of people (the 'experts' at Versailles or Geneva) the responsibility for deciding what kind of world we want for ourselves and our children." Furthermore, conditions were ripe for altering the status quo: "The opportunity for radical action is at hand. Recent legislation for the pooling of patents in the United States is a step towards bringing to the service of the nation things which had been kept as the profitable privilege of the few."¹⁴

The study also reflected the increasing impact of cultural relativism on American society. The authors believed that "human intelligence [was] on trial" and that traditional doctrines such as laissez faire economics, individualism, and nineteenth-century liberalism no longer provided ordered solutions to increasingly complicated problems. These beliefs tended to promote oversimplified answers and "simply demonstrate[d] that the human mind is having a hard time coping with the problems of this age, and that people need a few things fixed and certain." The authors proceeded to cite nine examples of cultural contradictions from Robert Lynd's Knowledge For What (1939), one of which spoke to Americans' belief in their country's greatness, but the simultaneous realization of the need for friends and allies based on mutual respect and understanding in a sometimes dangerous and hostile world.¹⁵

One of those "fixed and certain" properties of human reality was regionalism. The authors of The Northern Plains went to great lengths to explain the outlook of the Plains' people and how their region differentiated them from the rest of America. "North American civilization is thought of as being something uniform, pretty much the same over the continent; and indeed all of us hear many of the same radio programs, drive the same models of automobiles and see the same movies. Yet the differences between one region and another are very great The important point, however, is not just that this region is different but that it must be different." The relatively new science of ecology informed

social scientists with the method of analysis and description of the region--an environmental explanation seemingly based on the more concrete and factual footings of biology, geography, and agronomy. "There are natural and inescapable reasons for that difference which have not always been clearly understood and are still not generally recognized. In every region inhabited by human beings, man has had to learn the special tricks and techniques of adaptation to the physical and climatic conditions of that region or pay Nature's ruthless penalty--expulsion or extermination." The authors believed that the Plains' people had not yet learned that truth: "The tragedy is that after all the exposure of errors, especially after the bitter lessons of the Drought and Depression years, there are still many who do not recognize that physical conditions of the Northern Plains are different and therefore farming methods, social institutions and economic structures must be different also." The doctrine of regionalism, like the theory of ecology, taught that nothing stood alone in nature. Thus, "it must be made clear at the beginning that one cannot think intelligently about this, or any other region, in isolation." A region needed "to find its proper character and distinctive meaning, not in order to assert itself against other regions, but in order to give its best contribution: the particular kind of production (including art and social services) which it is uniquely fitted to make to the larger life of the nation and the world." Locating its rightful niche in the larger system would not diminish the stature of any region: "This is not inconsistent with maintaining the dignity and individuality of the Plains people."¹⁶

An important object of The Northern Plains in a World of Change was to shift the balance away from the peoples' growing cultural allegiance to the lures of mass society, back toward the region, and by implication, the locale. The authors directly challenged the newer consumer-driven materialism and the emphasis placed on the cash nexus. Regional self-expression and creativity hopefully "might be a substitute for commercial entertainment and the present acquisitive tendency--the rush to acquire ever more refined gadgets and 'comforts' which represent the itching standards and brittle pleasures of Hollywood and Broadway."

New technology in the forms of agricultural and industrial machines and consumer goods represented both promise and negation. Release from physical drudgery and increased potential productivity symbolized the positive side of technology; liabilities surfaced as centralized industrialization and the concentration of worldwide markets and distribution systems threatened to fix the Northern Plains in an even more rigid colonial status. Not only technology, but the system of finance capitalism seemed to conspire against the Plains by sucking money out of the region, but restricting credit inflow. Private credit markets treated the Plains like other regions, perhaps even more cautiously, and the fact that the dominant industry was agriculture and that the growing conditions there were the most unpredictable of any region in North America further compounded the problem. The authors believed that this region could not survive culturally within a democratic framework solely as a producer of raw materials and a consumer of externally-produced finished goods. "These devices receive their greatest value only if they are used by people in their own community for their own self expression. Movie theaters and the radio bring 'foreign' programs into the Plains' communities. How much more effective and worthwhile would these inventions be if the Plains' philosopher, the cowboy artist, the Plains' storyteller, the unknown poet and musician could use them to express themselves to the world; to stimulate the creation of a local community life and interest in the region."¹⁷

Something of a utopian vision based on a regional social and economic system emerged from the fixation in the The Northern Plains in a World of Change on new reciprocal relationships between the community and the region and the region and the nation. The authors took on the issue of the individual and society when they declared that the Northern Plains could act as a model of cooperation and regional planning for the whole United States, which in turn could speak to the solution of the existing world crisis. In particular, "The Northern Plains should testify, before all democracy, that absolute individualism is a snare and a delusion; that there is nothing fearsome or immoral about the

other way of handling life which belongs with the words 'social,' 'collective.'" The sometimes harsh existence on the Plains spotlighted "the inevitable insufficiency and powerlessness of the isolated individual." The authors saw no necessary progression from democratic socialism to any sort of totalitarianism, and if socialism devolved into tyranny, then it would have been caused by a lack of diligence and fortitude on the part of the people. The authors made the link between planning and the social nature of all human cultures: "in a democratic form, planning is a form of cooperation, of that mutual aid which is both a necessity and an obligation." Naturally, some of their colleagues found such references distressingly radical, yet many of these same people were forced to admit at the Saskatoon Conference that the unsettled times demanded such charged rhetoric which would provoke discussion and hopefully motivate people to act.¹⁸

Regionalists anticipated that cultural change, as a result of the adult education and study group format for which The Northern Plains report was written, would arise in local communities first, but even locales could be "properly understood only in relation to their regional background." That understanding highlighted the underdeveloped nature of rural communities in the Northern Plains. Settlement had occurred quickly and recently, much of it in the 1880s and 1890s. The authors announced that "This region constitutes a unique human experiment," because it had no deep historical background, full of customs and traditions to fall back on in difficult or uncertain times. Simultaneously with its settlement, the technological revolution and attendant mobility denied the Plains a sense of place. A "get rich quick" attitude further undercut local cohesiveness. "The strength of the money-motive in the early agriculture of the Plains was a main factor holding back the development of strong community life. . . . when many of those who farmed in the region knew that they might pull up stakes tomorrow and a great many believed they could make enough money in a few seasons to make possible their retirement to some place back in the East, or on the Pacific Coast." Plains' people did begin to establish communities, but they began to

breakdown in the years of oversupply, drought, and depression in the 1920s and on into the 1930s. Community advocates phrased the general problem of rural culture: "What kind of rural community life is compatible with the present trends toward increased urbanization, increased mechanization and even more widely diffused cosmopolitanism?" The mass society constituted a severe threat to the viability of the small community; "huge metropolitan areas . . . suck[ed] into them much of the best human and cultural material from the small towns and villages." Small communities could only survive if the balance between rural and urban was "readjusted" toward the countryside, "if there are to be any Plains communities 'fit for heroes to return to.'"¹⁹

Over and over again the authors of The Northern Plains stressed the uniqueness of their region. This area featured a variety of soil types, most of which were relatively fertile and could grow crops familiar to the initial settlers. The limiting factor in agriculture proved to be the climate, specifically the lack of precipitation. The entire region generally received less than twenty inches per year, but the amount was extremely variable to the point of being ruinous to crops in some years. Cattle ranchers were among the earliest white settlers, and they adapted moderately well to the demanding conditions of the Plains. They left much of the land intact in drought-resistant and soil-holding native grasses. Settlement peaked in the decade of 1909-1919, when a climatic wet cycle prevailed and commodity prices soared. Railroads subsidized the land stampede; farmers plowed up the grasses and planted little else than wheat. They failed to adjust their ideas brought from the more humid East to the changing conditions of the Plains. The calamity of the Dust Bowl and the Depression broke their belief in progress and potential prosperity, and colored the view of young people. Outmigration began in earnest and continued into the war years prodded on by booming urban areas, industries, and in relation to what was left on the Plains, a vibrant and vital cultural life. Government programs in the thirties helped a great deal, but were largely unable to change the underlying conditions. For example, the 160 acre homestead was for

the most part inadequate from the beginning, and little was done to change that pattern of settlement. Many observers urged faster and planned accommodation to the Plains environment, because they feared imminent destruction of the extant culture through abandonment or the rise of large farm-ranches worked by migrant laborers. Nevertheless, the authors obviously refused to give up on Plains' people because they believed in their strength of character. "Although many came with little intention of really building homes and communities, . . . yet on the whole the people of the Plains are a hardened, self-reliant group who have had to make great changes already and do not fear change as much as many groups do. Furthermore, being on the margin with respect to climate, prices, market conditions, they have been forced to learn about economics and politics, . . . they are a world conscious people who at the same time keep much of the spirit of the frontier."²⁰

As the dominant economic activity in the Plains, agriculture carried enormous implications for small community health. Almost half of The Northern Plains report focused on the future of this topic. In particular, the authors identified five agricultural dimensions amenable to reform: the use and control of land; the financing of farming; the technological impact on community; better marketing and economic arrangements; and the amelioration of social institutions on the Plains. Like the decentralists and Southern Agrarians before them, the institutional regionalists held sacrosanct the concept of small private ownership by the many, because it was considered absolutely necessary for the existence of real democracy. Nevertheless, they realized that although there were real advantages to private ownership of land particularly, this idea had been perverted on the Plains and did not harmonize well with the environmental and agricultural realities. "By making a fetish of private ownership, the great bulk of the people have been blind to the exploitation which has occurred and the symptoms of distress among farm owners and creditors alike. By placing ownership on a higher pedestal than the goal of security and control, the people have created the very conditions that make for difficulty in achieving private ownership and security: namely, the

boosting of land values to unreasonable heights; the seeking of ownership for purely speculative and personal gain . . . the encouragement to farmers to invest savings in land, only to have it taken away when unfortunate events occur; and the directing of the flow of savings of farmers into land when it might have been socially more desirable to put [it] into greater material and spiritual well-being of their families." Applied to the Northern Plains, the regional critique shifted the focus of the agriculturally-based community from the ownership of land to the control and use of the land. Stewardship, not ownership, became the operative word: "The private ownership system . . . is no guarantee that land will not be exploited. . . . the land which now already is in private, public or cooperative hands can be controlled in the interests of the individual, the community, the region and the nation."²¹

The authors suggested three alternative patterns of land control, none of which were mutually exclusive. One involved the creation of local control boards, in which reputable citizens would oversee the ownership and protection of the land. A second would establish "joint farmer-expert-government committees at the regional level" which would coordinate actions by the local boards. The third looked to the national government to set production controls to aid in the creation of fair prices and the satisfaction of different region's needs. Admittedly, these changes moved toward "socialization of control but not necessarily of ownership." Yet, there still would be a place for private ownership in land, but on a share basis like in a corporation. The local citizens' boards would act like the board of directors, with hinterlands becoming the property of their nearby communities. Farm operators would be free to choose among production options, and combined with the strength of local boards could resist domination by outside or internal authorities and maintain stability to oppose enticements and encroachments by a tyrannical federal government or those "offered by a strong demagogue."²²

Another dimension in agricultural reform involved changing the credit system from a finance capitalism model to a community-based or cooperative model. Agriculture's special

problem in relation to credit revolved around being drawn into the boom and bust cycle of industry, yet being unable to stand up to that kind of adversity as well. Agriculture needed long mortgages, low interest rates, and the possibility of flexible payments to account for crop failures. An enlightened credit policy, for example, would obviate the need for the liquidation of cow herds when stock raisers had poor crop years and did not have enough feed to keep them through to the next breeding season. All of these mechanisms would promote greater community stability and well-being in the long term.²³

Not only did unfair credit policies create waste in agriculture, but so did constantly changing technology. For example, transitions from horse to large power units to smaller power units occurred in such small time periods, that some farmers had equipment from all three eras on their farms, but only used extensively one type. The Northern Plains report argued for technological and organizational mechanisms which would produce long-term stability and security, with less emphasis on maximum production of crops. Its authors offered such alternative solutions as soil and water conservation measures, crop insurance, the ever-normal granary, flexible credit, and region-wide diversification of farming activities.²³

Much like the Populists of old, the authors called for an end to monopolistic pricing of manufactured goods, and commodity prices seemingly below the cost of production. ". . . it involves a questioning of the whole system of private enterprise which allows the restrictions of monopoly to exist without some form of control and regulation." Beside government involvement in such regulation, proposals ranged from more small scale factories in the Northern Plains to development of larger systems of cooperatives, like the Farmers' Union service stations which they claimed definitely lowered costs.²⁴

The final dimension of agricultural reform spoke to the entire rural culture. Rural areas needed special help due to the relative lack of population density, yet most of the institutional means for social support existed in urban areas, often designed to serve

predominantly urban needs. The study quite openly called for redistribution of wealth by means of the taxation system in order to help ailing rural families, churches, schools, local governments, and public health facilities. Furthermore, the connection between citizens and government at all levels should move into a more active partnership based on the regional concept, but allowing for a decentralization of power as reflected in the county agricultural planning groups, the Soil Conservation Service programs, or projects conducted by the Forest Service. Moreover, the authors offered ideas for changing patterns of residence to more closely clustered and dense settlements, sometimes around irrigated areas, with even farms and ranches grouped more closely, perhaps on the European village model.²⁵

All these potential solutions reflected a basic belief predicated on two related assumptions. The most important and productive way of approaching contemporary social problems was through the regional analysis. As a description and explanation of the Northern Plains cultural phenomenon, it seemed particularly relevant and cogent to the institutional regionalists. Tied to the concept of regionalism was the notion of the community (especially the small community on the Plains) as the place, both geographical and cultural, in which the regional vision would be realized. "Regionalism . . . is a process of adaptation to local conditions. . . . even man, until he became arrogant, [could] learn to live with the forces of nature operating in the region." Seeing nature whole and working with it did not mean passivity, but an active, conscious, and reasoned preparation for the future utilizing the environmental conditions as society found them. "Effective planning can only be on a regional basis, otherwise it is partial planning and ineffective." Essentially, The Northern Plains in a World of Change report called for a cultural renaissance which would be achieved in part by "a gathering of strength by more concentration of people from now dispersed farms. This would do more than merely resettle people where the utilities would be more fully available. It would cause a breakup of many of the outworn ideas, customs and prejudices--those related to land ownership, to individual competition rather than

cooperation, to licentious freedom to do as one pleases instead of group participation in the advancement of a solid community."²⁶

At a very real level, institutional regionalists pointed out and tried to deal with the advance of the mass society on the Northern Plains in the early 1940s. They urged not only the rebalancing of rural and urban sectors, but the revitalization of agrarianism on a regional basis. "The real problem is how to integrate and combine the industrial, the urban and the mechanical with the agricultural, the rural and the natural." These regionalists agreed with Mumford's observation of megalopolitan unwholesomeness, but they also viewed the other extreme of the barren countryside as equally undesirable. They found their ideal community form in the "cooperative village community." It is not an exaggeration to pronounce The Northern Plains report one of the most radical documents in the American liberal political tradition, and as such, it is surprising that it did not stimulate more opposition, especially outside of its region of study.²⁷

Although the study generated mostly favorable responses through its winter distribution to farm groups, adult study groups, ruralists, and academics, controversy was not far in the future. In the fall of 1942, the RF issued a grant to South Dakota State College to hire agricultural economist Ralph E. Johnston to launch a survey of responses to The Northern Plains report and "also to advance the general purpose of defining and explaining the human outlook which was typical of the Northern Plains." After the Saskatoon Conference, Thomson and his associates had revised the work on issues like land ownership and credit to remove a "certain naivete of radicalism." The authors and distributors were also careful to disassociate the study from the RF, although they continued to use its letterhead. The RF maintained optimism about the study's usefulness, while harboring some reservations about Thomson's excessive liberalism relating to his idea of communal cooperation. Meanwhile, Johnston inadvertently initiated a controversy which probably would have arisen sooner or later, by writing to R. O. Hillgren, a prominent South Dakota

editor, and providing him with a copy of the report. After only reading the preface and introduction, Hillgren gave a biased presentation to the Kiwanians at Pierre, South Dakota. As the home of the state legislature, word quickly spread throughout Pierre, and groups like the South Dakota Development Association attacked the study and demanded legislative action against it. Hurried debate led to a vote for a legislative stand "unfavorable to such 'propaganda' for state control of enterprise." Furthermore, the legislature warned against the "supine acceptance of ideologies," and condemned the report "supported by the Rockefeller Foundation."²⁸

Immediately, Alfred M. Eberle, Dean of Agriculture at South Dakota State came to Johnston's aid. He defended him and observed that the publicity generated by the controversy went a long way toward popularizing the study. The RF did not take the South Dakota Legislature's resolution too seriously, but acknowledged that it was important to maintain focus on the report and its local and regional roots. Johnston himself responded to the charges in a 3,000 word newspaper article. He reiterated most of the study's major points including the basic idea of the urgency for change to help determine post-war realities before rapid change made present action inadequate. "All over the world, the age old problem of the relationship between the individual and society has taken on new, conflicting forms. Human beings are interdependent. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the Northern Plains the inadequacy of the private individual has been made more glaringly obvious than in other regions." He strenuously tried to counter criticism of excessive planning in the report by redefining planning to make it a natural course of action when isolated individuals failed. He also stressed that full employment was vital, if not achieved by private means, then by some other organizations. He presented the report's message as an updated populist reform program, with pride in the Plains region, but openness to cooperation with the federal government in terms of development, not just for "handouts." Johnston concluded with a plea for a "strong network of communities which cut across the lines of sectional interests

and absorbs the common interests of the farmer, the statesman, the villager, and the city dweller."²⁹

Generally criticism of The Northern Plains which came from scholars was restrained, although occasionally not so muted disparagement arose within even the ranks of those involved in the Great Plains Studies. George Smith, for example, believed that the study was too "colored with the Watson Thomson ideology," and that the study should be put into the hands of others besides the "extreme brave-new-worldists." More typical was the reaction by rural sociologist Lowry Nelson, who most liked the idea of people themselves pulling together to face problems; they should not fall into the trap of depending on the government exclusively. He expressed reservations about whether the people were ready for such changes: "I fear, however, that they have not yet gotten away from the pioneer conception of the job to be done, namely, the building of bridges and the killing of rattlesnakes, and in short, the satisfaction of the purely physical need of people." Newspaper editors, with a few exceptions, also generally agreed with the main propositions of the study. One such editor accepted the "notion of planning and pooling of resources and effort on the parts of government, labor, industry, and agriculture." Philosopher George Dykhuizen praised the study and said that colleges were enthusiastic about its educational implications. Despite the interest of a number of individuals and positive evaluation by the RF, the national media largely failed to display much attention; the study's regional message ultimately remained for the most part on the Plains, where its genesis primarily occurred.³⁰

The impact of The Northern Plains in a World of Change was essentially to set out a developmental baseline for the Northern Plains Region. Its history was recited in order to fully capture the problems of its present, and extrapolate its future challenges. The next great challenge for the institutional regionalists was to create a cultural mechanism by which this analysis and evaluation could be interpreted and applied within real-life settings. The conference in Billings, Montana held in November 1943, was a direct consequence of this

attempt at interpretation. The RF was particularly pleased in that it was not requested to fund this conference, except for miscellaneous support of a few Canadian delegates. Organization and funding for the conference came from Montana State College and the Western Policy Committee, and this represented a step toward the RF's desired outcome of greater local initiative and independence from external institutional support. In this case, the RF rightly recognized the critical nature of grassroots support and action in any regional reform project. Everyone involved in the Billings conference had high praise for the work done there because it demonstrated both the significance of "the Study" as a statement of beliefs and ideological perspective, and as a motivational tool for indigenous organizations of the Plains region. Marshall was particularly encouraged, and stated: "Of course I was especially interested in reactions the report gives to 'The Northern Plains in a World of Change.' If any evidence were needed as to how stimulating a document it is, the discussion led off by the Lewiston, Montana group certainly provides it. I began to wonder if there is any section of the country which is facing up so squarely to its problems and with such progress toward the real clarification of them." Yet in a note of realism, he was also struck by how the discussion pointed up the tendency to revert to old behavior patterns out of uncertainty over the future course of events.³¹

Nevertheless, the Billings conference and its indirect legacy, the Montana Study, constituted Marshall's "next push of the mind," or the turning of theory into practice. Whereas from the RF point of view, The Northern Plains in a World of Change was simply a study of a regional outlook, interpretation and communication of these findings "marked a more advanced stage of the regional idea." That higher level of development was achieved most significantly in the Montana Study, which was largely the dream of Ernest O. Melby, the newly appointed chancellor of the six institution-University of Montana system. Melby, a nationally known educator from Northwestern University, took his office in July 1943, and proceeded to promulgate his interests in getting more of the University's education off the

campus, and stabilizing the family and the small community. In these objectives, he was influenced no doubt by conclusions brought out in The Northern Plains in a World of Change. The application of those conclusions to the state of Montana revealed a history of commercial exploitation of both physical and human resources, excessive mobility, and chronic social and economic instability. Melby believed that Montana's resources for higher education were underdeveloped and underused, and he was determined that they could become a focal point for regional development in its fullest sense. Essentially, the humanities would be the lens through which Montana's people could analyze and evaluate its economic and social problems. Melby believed that by bringing the humanities to the people, he and his backers like Kraenzel and Corbett could instill pride into the collective heart of a state which appeared to be demoralized and adrift. For Melby, democracy depended on "local integrity," a kind of libertarianism which spoke of individual freedom and proprietorships and opposed dependence on external institutions and even internal large-scale consortia such as existed in the Anaconda Copper-Montana Power combination. The end of the war would be a turning point in Montana history, and Melby urged that his vision of democracy not be allowed to fail at that time. Since he believed that the core of the American character and soul was found in small towns and the countryside, those places too could not be allowed to fail.³²

The RF became involved when Melby brought his plans to Stevens in early 1943. Stevens observed that "His [Melby's] hope is to apply the results of the Northern Plains work in a complete demonstration of educational service to all age groups." Stevens was happy to hear that the study would go beyond economic questions and move substantially into the humanities. Stevens favorably compared a successful ongoing RF-funded program in the history and folklore of western New York State at Cornell University to Melby's proposal. H. G. Merriam, chairman of the humanities at Montana State University, also supported the regionalist agenda in his request that the RF fund the re-establishment of a creative writing

magazine, Frontier and Midland, which would act as a much needed outlet for the anticipated rise in creative effort after the war. In the hope of gaining the approval of the RF, Melby suggested the inclusion of many groups and individuals, including the Farmers Union, the Federation of Labor, and urban officials, which would have the effect of making a potential Montana educational project much like the Northern Plains Project in terms of being a blend of rural and urban participants. Pressed by Marshall to come up with more specific information, Melby suggested that Merriam and interested associates define more fully the role of the humanities for a Montana study. To that end, Melby asked for funding to send Merriam and Montana State historian Merrill Burlingame to Canada to study their humanities programs and to the University of Wisconsin and University of Minnesota for their art and continuing education programs respectively, which the RF granted.³³

By the Fall of 1943, the RF had given favorable opinions on support for a Montana project in the humanities, and so Melby put together a formal proposal to the RF, with the help of Merriam and Burlingame. Their proposal stressed the central role of the humanities in the creation of a balanced, vibrant, and progressive culture which depended on a "program of higher education designed to improve the quality of living in the State of Montana." Melby noted that concern for America's well-being after the eventual war's end ran deep, and "not only government agencies [and educational institutions], but organizations under the leadership of private business leaders are putting forth nation-wide efforts in this direction. An example is the work of the Committee on Economic Development." Melby assumed with many others that America was quite capable of renewing its economic prosperity in the post-war period, so that the main challenge would be to provide ". . . for large numbers of our people to turn their attention to literature, music, art, and more creative human relations. If, however, education in the humanistic field is to have validity and effectiveness, it must be closely attuned to the cultural background and present environment of the people whose education we seek to further." That is, it should be regional in nature.³⁴

After an RF appropriation of \$25,000 for a three-year study in the Life and Traditions of Montana (later called the Montana Study) in March 1944, the project picked up speed, form, and an additional emphasis, especially after the appointment of its new director, philosopher and nationally known expert on rural affairs, Baker Brownell. He combined Melby's interests in the humanities, the role of the university in adult education, and regionalism, with a profound belief in and advocacy of the small community as the heart and soul of any conceivably worthwhile culture. Melby considered a number of individuals before deciding on Brownell as the best person for the job, despite pressure to appoint writer and lecturer Joseph Howard, whose book Montana: High, Wide and Handsome (1943) had not only received good reviews in the New York Times, but endeared him to many liberal Montanans. Melby, Stevens, and Brownell met on April 28, 1944, and laid the basis for the new program. Brownell subsequently hired Howard as the head of community studies and Northwestern University sociologist Paul Meadows as the third full-time staff member, all to be headquartered at the State University campus at Missoula, Montana, but able to draw on the resources and sponsorship of all six branches of the University of Montana system.³⁵

Although Brownell echoed Melby's primary purpose of the Montana Study as finding "ways to enrich the quality of living in Montana," he subtly changed the original objectives, methods, and direction of the program to concentrate on: engaging the University of Montana in outreach efforts in small towns; developing mechanisms to stabilize the family and small communities; and boosting the appreciation and enjoyment of small town life. Thus, the Montana Study was to be a research project in the application of the "humanities" to the lives of people in small communities. Regionalism, the Montana Study, and the notion of bringing the university to the people received further consideration and support at the Conference on the Arts and Sciences College held at Missoula in May 1944. Brownell and Melby attended the conference, chaired by Merriam, as "visiting participants." Lewis Mumford delivered a key speech in which he noted that they were living in an

"unprecedented age" of change. In addition to the traditional role of college, which was the search for truth and the transmittance of knowledge, the requirements of change now set new tasks for higher education. This new mandate consisted of: fighting anti-reason; dispelling myths and acting against prejudices; boosting freedom, and fighting bureaucratic organizations; harmonizing disparate cultures, which found themselves at odds; using science and technology responsibly; fostering self-realization through creative leisure; and bridging the gap between the university and the people. All of these actions taken collectively would restore and promote regionalism.³⁶

The Montana Study did not come out of vacuum, of course, having taken much of its cue from The Northern Plains in a World of Change and Howard's book. But both Melby and Brownell wanted the Montana Study to go well beyond the aforementioned studies into the realm of application and even social change. Brownell was eager to personally investigate studies in new approaches to home economics centering on home production being conducted by the Kellogg Foundation in Michigan, and the community art and folklore programs developed by the Wisconsin Folk School at the University of Wisconsin. Brownell also revived the concept of the community study group, first used extensively in Manitoba, and made it a key component of one of the four main activities of the Montana Study--small community research and demonstration projects. Secondly, new research in architecture, sociology, and home economics would be brought to bear on the problem of the separation of consumption from production in the home. The third major thrust of the project would be in the realm of education, training teachers in community activities and for folk schools, developing services to communities to help them develop home-grown fine arts, and transmitting new methodology and materials on cultural rehabilitation of communities to teachers. The final objective of this ambitious project involved conducting a "cultural survey" of the entire state. In all of this, Brownell consistently emphasized the importance of community participation and local initiative in education, because he believed that no

significant community progress could take place outside of the process of community self-education and realization of its own unique cultural heritage, identity, and worth. To this end, in its first year of operation the Montana Study staff wrote or had in preparation 30 books, articles, and reports, conducted 13 field projects including a partially completed documentary film on community life in relation to land use, organized two major conferences featuring population specialist O. E. Baker and community advocate Arthur Morgan, plus six more smaller conferences, and delivered 341 lectures or conference appearances.³⁷

Perhaps one of the most provocative concepts and projects to emerge within the larger Montana Study was Brownell's notion of the "productive home." Brownell defined it in a letter to R. R. Renne, president of Montana State College in Bozeman, because that was to be the concept's research site. Brownell believed that American society needed to make a major decision about the role of the family in the future, and that was why he felt it was imperative to include the productive home in the research agenda of the Montana Study. He attempted to clarify the concept by listing his working assumptions as follows:

The home or family is a primary unit of greatest significance which we must try to maintain in our kind of society; if it is to be maintained, the family should be a functional group; this means functional as an economic group as well as social, emotional, recreational, etc.; as an economically functional group, the members of the family, both children and adults, should make some economic contribution to the general family welfare; if the members are not economically functional in this way, the home becomes an economic liability to the income-producing members of it; this is probably the main reason for the disintegration and decline of the family in modern times in the Western world. This economic liability is indicated by the low birth rates in the more prosperous families or the failure to have children or be married at all in many modern groups.

Brownell called this a "key problem facing our American civilization." If children could not be made to be more of a cultural asset, then the United States would run the risk of having procreation taken over or heavily influenced by the state, as he noted about Russia. Brownell made his emphasis on the family as the most important primary group even more singular

and pointed when he asked in a later position statement "whether the family as a truly cooperative and stable community is any longer possible in Montana or, indeed, anywhere else in the world." The Montana Study continued to ask how the family could survive under modern conditions, and what could stop the drainage of young people from Montana and from rural to urban areas. Although Brownell never did fully answer those questions, he and his project certainly "shook up" the Montanan cultural milieu for three years. In time, he was able to report to Marshall that he had the support of a number of people concerning the productive home idea, including Kraenzel, Renne, Mckee, and several other enthusiasts who wanted to develop educational programs to help people to better live in their own communities.³⁸

Montana residents often heard of the Montana Study through its many research projects into subjects constituting the state's cultural history such as the Indians' heritage, folk origins, tales and stories of Montana's topographic regions, and the institutional developments such as government, education, communications, transportation, religion, the family, and voluntary associations. But the activity which caught the most attention both inside and outside the state was the community study group. It was a technique best adapted to the small town or rural community--under 2,500 people--which brought together townspeople interested in fostering greater community self-awareness and cohesiveness. Since Montana was a largely rural state of impressive size and regional variation, the study group seemed to be the logical process by which to foster cultural renewal. In Brownell's words, "This modern version of the town meeting too often is forgotten amid current efforts to get mass results in social affairs by mass methods. The study group is a social and political, non-partisan body bound closely to the welfare of the small democratic community and the family structure that underlies it." This commitment to the locale was based on the assumption that "Unless there is opportunity for the people in the small community to meet and discuss the problems of their group, the democratic community and functional family

will continue to decline in American life." The Montana Study advised seven experimental study groups during its first year of existence, with the first study group acting as a pilot project. From the experiences of the group organized in the remote, unincorporated hamlet of Lonepine, came a standard study manual entitled Life in Montana, as seen in Lonepine, a small community. Study groups met weekly for ten weeks and covered one topic per meeting on the following: (1) Why We Are Here, (2) Our Town and Its People, (3) Our Town and Our Work, (4) Our Town and Our State, (5) Montana, A Place to Live; (6) Montana and Our Nation, (7) The Future of Montana, (8) The Future of Our Town in Relation to Its People, (9) How to Make Life Better in Our Town, (10) What We Have Accomplished. From such small beginnings, big things could evolve, at least to those people involved in the process.³⁹

Community study groups quickly became both the theoretical and popular core of the Montana Study. Its creators had hoped that the Study would be a "center of voluntary coordination" for scattered cultural projects, and the first year's experiences with study groups, at least, seemed like ample confirmation. Brownell even proclaimed that "The study group has become the best instrument that has yet been tried in this experimental project." Requests for help in establishing new study groups increased rapidly, and it became immediately apparent that the Montana Study was understaffed. Already in June 1944, Brownell was concerned that the project would be spread too thinly. In many instances, the paid staff was aided, or in some cases, supplanted by volunteers who functioned as well as the staff in spreading the message of local and regional cultural enrichment.⁴⁰

The core of the study group effort was based on a philosophy which attempted to actualize the humanities, in their fullest sense, in places where their culturally uplifting effects had been passed by, overlooked, or ignored. This generally meant that rural residents were the intended clients of the Montana Study, but staff members tried to keep all sectors of society apprised of its mission and progress. Thus, on one occasion Brownell addressed the

national education community with an article on the Study in School and Society. He described the Study's field as the humanities, or all human values, and the central role education played in daily life. Education should not stop after high school or college, but should be a life-long experience; when tied to the collectivity, it would enrich the lives of the people by making community existence substantial and full-bodied again. For Brownell, the values of the humanities ". . . are direct. Its virtues lie in making this day meaningful and worthwhile in the belief that the tomorrows arising out of this day then will be also worthwhile. Lives made harsh and sterile in order to attain postponed rewards such as success, fame, wealth, retirement, learnedness, or virtuosity in the arts have a way of remaining harsh and sterile after those rewards have been secured." Anticipating one of themes of the 1960s counterculture, Brownell advocated being more of a participant, less of a spectator. Direct-action experience was preferable to secondary vicarious experience. In a mass society it was too easy to allow standards of worth and value to be set by experts, virtuosos, and world-class artists and star athletes. Constant comparison to these levels of perfection only served to vitiate and undermine the genuineness and beauty in the daily life of ordinary people and their communities. When art was excessively withdrawn from the immediate contexts of living, experience became degraded and jejune. This condition was decadence, or a serious disconnection between emotion and action. For Brownell, the only solution to this problem of modern life was to be found in the small community, the locus of human existence and the setting of cultural experience. Renewal of the small community would be achieved by utilizing the technique of the study group, through which participants would reunite thought, emotion, and action in a hands-on approach to learning about their local and regional culture and its relation to the larger world. Thus Brownell concluded that the "community study group, if handled with respect for the implicit intelligence and leadership in such groups, can recapture much of the social initiative and vitality that our small communities have lost. In these groups the community can become aware of itself and

of its values. The groups are a democratizing agency of importance. . . . They point, indeed, to a new kind of education. It is the education of the folk."⁴¹

The above passage did indeed provide a window into the heart of the Montana Study's mission, which was essentially to utilize a regional approach for the re-creation of the democratic small community in a newly forming mass society. Brownell and his staff believed that the community study group was the most effective method of bringing locally relevant education to the people, thus strengthening the community, which in turn would bolster the ideology and experience of democracy in America. The Montana Study centered on these concepts: the study group, education in the humanities, the small community, and the democratic cultural experience. Brownell implied that these characteristics would develop naturally under the proper conditions, especially with the help of appropriate leadership. Leaders who were able to inject ideas and guidance without being paternalistic, patronizing, or overly critical of other people's beliefs were seen as the crucial element in the potential success of the study group. Another important rule in the development of productive study groups was allowing the communities to ask assistance on their own rather than trying to force changes on locales. The study groups appeared to work best in small communities, so true, cohesive communities of modest size should be encouraged to begin the group project. Another important characteristic of successful study groups was that they be representative of the community and as free as possible from factionalization. In addition, a permanent chairperson and secretary should be chosen by common agreement rather than by a vote. Size of the group was important in that it be kept small enough so that real dialogue would emerge, but not so small that the group would become a kind of exclusive club. Meetings should be held weekly in the same place, with formality kept to a minimum so that discussion and study could emerge easily. The Montana Study further recommended its specific course of study, Life in Montana, as a vehicle to keep the group focused without leading it toward any specific, preconceived conclusion. Moreover, the function of the study

group was not one of planning or action, but to increase awareness of the community and build solidarity in its members. "The study group is designed to help the community prepare for intelligent action. It should, ideally, remain as a permanent focus of community interest and information from which various action groups and planning groups will arise from time to time." Each meeting was devoted to a particular topic, with subjects of continuing interest referred to standing committees, which reported from time to time based on the extent of their research. Experience by Montana Study staffers showed that upon the completion of the first series of study meetings, most community study groups desired to continue a second or continuous series of meetings to either study further in their local cultural history, address a specific community problem, or develop some creative production designed to express their cultural heritage. Even in these instances, study group enthusiasts claimed that costs could easily be kept to a minimum, mainly through voluntary acts. Most importantly, the study groups were to remain as local in their direction and orientation as possible. Brownell noted: "The groups are infinitely flexible, infinitely adaptable, because each one is its own business, not the business of some outsider. Only on this basis can the study group become a significant part of American democratic life."⁴²

One of the most successful examples of the study group in action was in the village of Darby nestled in the mountains near the Bitterroot River in western Montana. This forest and ranching area supported a population of almost 1,000 people at its peak, but had dwindled to barely 500 in 1944. Depletion of the private timber lands threatened Darby with possible extinction. Despite the war-time boom in the rest of the country, Darby continued to lose jobs, as well as seventy five percent of its young people. The only remaining timber near the town belonged to the United States Government, and the Forest Service allowed logging only on a sustained yield basis. This amount equaled only one-third of the previous cut; in the face of this news, the last large logging operation went out of business. The closing served to hasten the demise of Darby's main street retailers. Property values fell and

civic morale plummeted. Most Darby citizens were aware of the interlocking problems the community faced, and many resisted the idea of letting the town die, but were unable to agree on a unified approach to the crisis. Then in the winter of 1945, Dennis Gray, a forester and former lumberjack, plus several other interested townspeople invited Baker Brownell to explain how the study group program of the Montana Study could help prevent Darby from becoming a ghost town. Thirty leading citizens began the series of weekly meetings using the study guide developed by the Lonestone study group. In addition, the group created three research committees on basic problem areas such as local industries, taxation, and recreational, educational, and cultural opportunities. Gray's committee on making a living quickly focused on the root of the problem--less harvestable timber meant fewer jobs. The only way to maintain the town's economic viability based on its main resource would be to develop value-added timber industries, such as local planing mills. Based on the committee's research, Darby had the potential for fourteen new industries. But the study group realized that they needed a civic spark to galvanize the rest of the townspeople in a common effort toward the rejuvenation of their town. The group hit upon the idea of a community-wide pageant-drama. Members of the community wrote, directed, and produced the play entitled "Darby Looks at Itself," with the aid of Bert Hansen, professor of drama at Montana State University. Richard Poston, a historian of the Montana Project, described the play as a "kind of modern morality show depicting the conflict between traditional practices of wastefully exploiting natural resources, and the modern scientific use of resources by careful planning."⁴³

In the afterglow of the play, which all the townspeople and many from the surrounding area attended, they completely turned around their previous defeatist attitude, and began to talk infectiously about ways to improve the town. The new optimistic atmosphere convinced a local lumberman to form a corporation for the building and operation of a new planing mill in town. Soon twenty-six people were employed by the plant, which showed that it respected

the concept of sustained yield forestry by purchasing a more efficient band saw rather than the traditional circular saw. The idea of home industries caught on rapidly, and a number of new enterprises started including a wood post treatment plant, a machine shop, a well drilling business, a sporting goods and gun store, a small planing mill, a cabinet shop, and a dairy and pasteurizing plant. A few people began to move in from the outside, noticed the civic pride and progress, and set up stores and operations including a hardware store, locker plant, a registered cattle ranch, a new dude ranch, an auto service center, a carpenter's service, and a new sawmill. The town began a beautification program, which was inaugurated by cleaning up an area around the community hall. The local school district voted to increase its taxes and increase the effectiveness of its facilities. The new civic consciousness also manifested itself in a plan to develop new and better roads in the region. Health and recreation needs were not forgotten as new connections with the country health agency were created and a full-time recreation director was hired to oversee a burgeoning array of sports, dancing, and club groups.⁴⁴

Hansen, as one might expect, attributed much of the Study's success in Darby, Conrad, Stevensville, and other Montana towns to his role in organizing town plays, pageants, and community celebrations. In one place, he even said that the "people of Montana proved to be uninterested in the 'town meeting' democracy advocated by the Montana Study," which of course was mainly Brownell's idea. Yet later in the same evaluation of the Study, Hansen gave Brownell more credit: "It is also true that many of the good things that have come to Darby in the last two years were advocated both in the study-group meetings and in the community drama." Certainly not all the study groups sponsored by the Montana Study were as successful as Darby in turning around their fortunes, whatever the primary cause of the change. But this "out-in-the-field" educational (cultural) transformation constituted the type of community phenomenon which Melby, Brownell, and Hansen all believed was necessary to save the unique brand of American democracy. Hansen claimed that "If this can be

accomplished it may be possible to inaugurate an educational program in America which could go a long way in making possible the democracy it is our custom to associate with our form of government."⁴⁵

No matter how successful any one study group was, the Montana Study as a whole was constantly dogged by criticism, rivalries, uncooperativeness, and institutional opposition. Before the Montana Study had even been launched, ill will had been created within the Montana University system of six semi-autonomous institutions. Melby, as chancellor of the system, had been instrumental in soliciting RF support for the Study. But out of frustration over the slow movement toward reform within the system, he resigned on July 1, 1944, the same day funds became available to start the Study. Immediately appointed to the presidency of Montana State University, Melby began to distribute the grant money to the Montana Study, thus giving the appearance of monopolizing the funds (which had been designated as going to the entire Montana University system), and creating jealousy among the other five institutions of higher education. This was especially true of Montana State College, which had co-sponsored the researching and writing of the influential study The Northern Plains in a World of Change. A number of people became suspicious of Melby and this carried over to the Montana Study as well. Subsequently, Brownell, Howard, and Meadows encountered an uncooperative attitude from many faculty members of the Montana University system, especially in resistance from the University extension service. This was a particularly troubling development since these were often the very professionals upon whom the Study had counted to help it spread its program.⁴⁶

Montana Study staffers had hoped for support from other institutional entities as well, including big business interests in Montana. The two dominant forces in the Montana economic scene were Anaconda Copper and Montana Power. As the leaders of the state's private enterprise, Brownell sought their support and urged them to send a representative to the Montana Committee, a state-wide advisory board set up to aid the Montana Study in

assessing the needs of the state and deciding on potential projects. But in what can be called the epitome of bad timing, Montana Study staffer Joseph Howard's article "The Montana Twins in Trouble?" appeared in Harper's Magazine in September, 1944. The "Montana Twins" were Anaconda Copper and Montana Power, or as they were routinely referred to by Montanans, "the Company." Howard professed that the Twins not only controlled the economy of Montana, but also its political realm. "For almost a generation a pair of fat boys like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, an arm of each flung chummily across the other's shoulders, have been running the show in Montana." Howard continued that no opposition to "the Company" had a chance, but that as a result of an investigation by the Federal Power Commission in March, 1944, "political control may yet be wrested from the dominant twins." Yet, Howard claimed that Montanans might not ever know the real truth of the situation, because the Twins controlled most of the media in Montana. Officially, "the Company" remained neutral toward the Montana Study, but its enmity toward Joseph Howard was well known. The Montana Study had not bit the hand that fed it, but it had come close.⁴⁷

Somewhat unexpectedly, the RF found itself under criticism for its connection to the Montana Study and Howard. Stevens had praised Howard's article, and told Brownell that it was "honest and courageous." The RF then found itself defending the Montana Study against critical letters which called Howard a "troublemaker" and a card carrying Communist. The critics complained that Montana's industries would be subjected to a witch hunt. The RF considered these letters so important, that president Fosdick himself responded to them. He defended the Montana Study and tried to clear up any misinformation. Fosdick pointed out that neither Melby or Howard were Communists; that Howard was subordinate to Brownell; that RF funds came with no strings attached (were not contingent on other funding sources); and that the Montana Study was not a "witch hunt" of mining and power industries in Montana. This defense mollified most of Howard's opponents for the time being, and it

seemed like the Montana Study would also escape being drawn into another even larger controversy which swirled throughout the northern plains region--the potential Missouri Valley Authority (MVA).⁴⁸

But again it was Howard and another article for Harper's Magazine which touched off more opposition to the Montana Study by means of "guilt by association." Surprisingly, no one tried to talk Howard out of doing the article--Brownell thought Howard's research would give him a broader experience. Howard's "Golden River" article appeared in May, 1945, and although it was largely neutral in tone, it provoked protest much like the last "round," and intensified when Howard heeded a request to testify to a Senate committee on the MVA. Howard made it clear he testified as a citizen and not a Study staff member, but the identification was made by many people eager to cast a wider net of suspicion and doubt. His use of expressions like "robber barons" to describe the powers that be alienated many and earned Howard characterizations such as "radical" and "wobbly." Fellow staffer, Paul Meadows, was not nearly so circumspect, making his support of the MVA quite clear. He used his half-time position as sociology instructor at Montana State University as a podium for preaching his beliefs and for debating MVA opponents. Meadows even antagonized Governor Ford of Montana, who wrote to Brownell that the growing bad names of some of the staffers were beginning to tarnish the Montana Study itself. "When these men go out and speak on such subjects, it is mighty hard for the average citizen to draw a fine line of distinction and determine where Montana Study ends and the individual's views begins." Against Brownell's expressed wishes, the Study came to be involved in political controversies which had no immediate connection with the Study's projects or statement of purpose. By late 1945, Brownell's reports to Stevens reflected the Study's growing negative image and opposition. Brownell acknowledged the Extension Service's hostility to the Montana Project, based on the fear that study groups and community dramas were undermining the position of the county agent. Brownell was forced to admit that the

opposition was pulling out its combative rhetoric more and more, and asked Stevens whether he and/or Howard should resign from the Study. Since the study groups continued to progress well, Stevens saw no reason to change the makeup of the staff. Yet in retrospect, it is easy to see that the long-term viability of the Study, and perhaps even regionalism, was severely compromised by ill-advised political activity.⁴⁹

Institutional complications continued to haunt the Montana Study and contributed to attenuation of its long-term planning. Brownell admitted to Stevens that the Study's plans had been reduced to a year-by-year basis so that something could be accomplished. The future of the Study itself was threatened by Melby's abrupt resignation in June, 1945, to take a job with New York University. Melby had given the Study an institutional home at Montana State University, and had persuaded the other five state colleges to assume their shares of the Study's funding during its second year of operation. The original funding arrangement had called for the state of Montana, through its colleges, to pay a larger proportion of the Study's budget as time went on, eventually to assume the entire cost if it deemed the program's continuance desirable. Added to this, turnover in personnel began to effect the day to day operations too. Paul Meadow's special grant from the RF ran out and he returned to teaching full-time. Community dramatist Bert Hansen was granted a leave of absence from Montana State College to work full-time with the Study. A year later Joseph Howard resigned to devote more time to his writing career. Brownell himself "saw the handwriting on the wall," and decided to return to Northwestern University. He would direct a study partially funded by the RF designed to train educators in the philosophy and methods of the Montana Study, and develop similar programs in the Midwest.⁵⁰

Funding for the third year produced another crisis, the first hurdle of which was initially played out in a meeting of the Executive Council, a body composed of the six presidents of the University system. James A. McCain, Melby's replacement at Montana State University, proclaimed that his institution would pay its share, no matter what the

others did. This tactic was enough to cajole the other presidents to make their full contributions as well. The next hurdle was surmounted through timely pressure brought to bear by the Study's greatest supporters--small town study group participants--on the State Board of Education; it acquiesced and kept the Study alive another year. Despite all the uncertainty and turmoil, the Montana Study continued to function productively throughout its third year, expanded into additional communities, added new personnel to fill the positions created by the departure of the original staff, and tried to establish a permanent source of funding to replace the soon-to-expire RF grant. Chancellor Selke convinced Brownell to remain as director (not in residence) to lend continuity to the Study and provide for time to acclimate a replacement director. With a new Chancellor in place who was sympathetic to the Study and new, competent staffers on the job, Brownell was confident that the Study would not only survive, but expand throughout Montana. Yet, he realized that McCain's State University was not nearly the at least marginally comfortable home it had been under Melby. Moreover, Brownell continued to seek additional funding from the RF because of lingering doubts about whether the Montana legislature would accept responsibility for the program after the RF grant ran out. Stevens bluntly responded that state support, not private help [was] required for cooperative work.⁵¹

Stevens' statement appeared prescient when on January, 1947, a Montana legislature four-man subcommittee left out an appropriation for the Montana Study, essentially closing it down, at least for that next year. Writing in the late 1940s, budding community activist Richard Poston believed the Study's denial of continued funding stemmed from a lack of knowledge throughout the state as to its real goals and accomplishments: "with at least two-thirds of the state ignorant of the project's existence, and with a small though powerful group of inherited enemies eager to dispose of it, . . . it is surprising, in light of these circumstances, that the program had been able to function at all, to say nothing of its achievements." RF officials took a slightly different view of the Study's demise: "The Montana Study was

criticized as 'unrealistic' and 'based upon the unjust philosophic assumption that Montana was a folk art center.' The real reasons, however, for letting the Study become inactive, were events growing out of intra- and interdepartmental feuds and political moves within the state to which the University was subjected." Perhaps too, the resumption of greater prosperity and a more normal life in postwar Montana, plus the beginning of a national shift in power from rural to urban votes in legislatures of largely agricultural states contributed to a lack of interest in funding more "social experiments."⁵²

Whatever the reason(s) for the cessation of the Study, it had a notable impact on Montana and any other place which had contact with it. For at least three years, "official" attempts were made to revive the Study. In lieu of a full-blown program of community education and renaissance, the State University appointed Bert Hansen to conduct a mini-version of the Study, but mainly dealing with community drama. Changes in college curricula, teaching methods, and lecture topics appeared in many Montana and Rocky Mountain colleges as a result of the Study's influence. The University Institute for Social Welfare recommended that "the Montana Study be recognized as productive of human welfare" and that it be restarted in the University of Montana system. Joseph Howard continued to work for a rejuvenation of the Study in his Roundup of Regional Arts program until his sudden death in 1951. Educators from a number of states and even some foreign countries began using material from the Study. Both before and after Brownell left the Study, he was besieged by requests to help set up similar studies all over the nation. Leaders throughout the Plains region and elsewhere, impressed by the achievements of the Study, made numerous proposals to the RF and other foundations for funding a variety of community- and humanities-oriented programs like writers' institutes, Ph.D programs in the humanities, regional magazines, county-wide projects of community improvement, crafts and historical museums, and assorted study group and community history projects. In fact, the interest shown to the RF concerning the Study was so large that it entertained proposals for

funds from Chancellor Selke for over two years after the end of the Montana Study before finally terminating its consideration. It was not for a lack of trying that the Study died. Through a furious exchange of letters late into the fall of 1949, Stevens, Brownell, Howard, Poston, and even Melby on occasion, pursued that perfect leader who could bring the Study back to life. Having given up on most of the then current leaders in Montana, Stevens looked to Howard, but realized that he was still too much of a liability. Brownell even endorsed Steven's suggestion that the Catholic ruralists take over the Study, pointing to Father Ligutti's success at Granger Homesteads. The Study never emerged from its limbo, and the experience of its rise and fall left some people glad, some sad, and many more simply scratching their heads wondering what had happened.⁵³

The fact remains, however, that the Montana Study was successful all out of proportion to the size of its staff and its small funding levels, and that no one, not even the participants themselves, have explained this phenomenon in community education, enrichment, and "enlightenment." Brownell was on to part of the answer when he told Stevens that a revamped Study would not work without a good leader. Perhaps he could realize that since it was he and Melby who were the dynamic individuals most responsible for the Study's progress. Both had a similar vision which they communicated to others, persuaded many doubters, and inspired countless participants. At the Study's end, Brownell believed another such project was more important in the humanities than any other current project in the universities. The study was obviously a powerful experience, because a number of people commented on how it changed their lives. Howard called the Study the best years of his life. Richard Poston was amazed by "how deeply enmeshed in the ideas of community development [were people] with no direct connection" to the Study. He attributed this to the power of the humanities. In fact, Poston's "conversion" to the ideology of community development was so complete that he insisted that the "battle for democracy will be won or lost in the local community." Poston, Brownell, and the other theorists of

community-based regionalism certainly understood the force of the ideational dimension of cultural life and were aware of the contest for ideas. Indeed, this consciousness of concepts and their utopian possibilities is what primarily drove them, and made the central participants "true believers" in their cause. Idealism and optimism over the potential of the Montana Study methodology spurred Poston to declare forcefully "The philosophy is so simple, yet so great, I wonder that more men have not seen it before. For what we have in this ideal, . . . , is the whole of life; a means whereby men can examine themselves and their culture, and in the process translate their democratic faith into democratic action. Art, drama, music, literature, politics, economics, religion are all parts of this whole. Each has its place, each has its contribution, but in the organism of the community they can be integrated. And that whole, if it can be made to function effectively from within, and oriented in world understanding, can give us our salvation." Marshall responded to Poston by writing that "from this letter and many others it is obvious that there exists a community of intellectual interests" regarding the philosophy underlying the Montana Study. It could never be replicated because it existed as a product of unique circumstances which involved inspiring leadership, a compelling utopian vision, a cause which empowered the people "passed by," an activism which came out of the best American populist and reformist traditions, and unstable wartime conditions conducive to external intervention and a state in need of educational assistance.⁵⁴

The Montana Study was not one of Mumford's "utopias of escape" or "utopias of reconstruction," because it neither sought to avoid the head-on collision with the emerging mass society, nor did it intentionally impose any collective tyranny to achieve its ends. It did propose an alternative to what Brownell called the "urban, anonymous, functional specialism" of a society constituted in extreme individualism and mass organizations. The small face-to-face community was preferable to either extreme individualism or mass totalitarianism. As such, on the one hand, it partook of the transitional type of regionalism

we have described as having expanded essentially on the basis of a social science technique. The regionalism of the Montana Study did not call for the construction of new communities as in the 1930s, or emphasize economic growth so much as community development did in the 1960s. On the other hand, it definitely voiced serious over- and undertones of Mumfordian, "organic community" regionalism. In this context, small community advocates tried to resist the marginalization of rural culture and stop the process by which a substantial rural minority was being reduced to just one of many small minorities. It is worth remembering, however, that the small community proponents were just one medium-sized group within the larger cultural opposition group extant in the late 1940s. Their efforts to modulate and transform the onrushing mass society to the needs of the small rural community amounted to little more than pinpricks in what they saw as the bloated body of the growing corporate-managerial, welfare state.⁵⁵

Although institutional regionalists suffered some setbacks, like the demise of the Montana Study, they continued to promulgate their message in the form of nascent community development projects in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The spotlight for action gradually shifted from focusing on large regions like the Northern Plains or whole states like Montana, to smaller units-- areas within states such as the thirty-one counties of southern Illinois, or even certain clusters of small communities within such areas. Many of these incipient programs took off in conjunction with the establishment of university-sponsored community bureaus or state agencies for community development such as in Washington, Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, and slightly later, Illinois. The relative success of the Montana Study was instrumental in stimulating continuing interest in the rehabilitation of the small community. In fact, most of the states west of the Mississippi River made requests for materials and trained personnel to cope with their own community problems, based on the ideas of regional consciousness and methods of community group study pioneered by the Montana Study.⁵⁶

As a way to meet this demand and to keep Baker Brownell, the acknowledged American "guru" of the small community, active and involved in the leadership of the regional/small community movement, the RF appropriated \$25,000 to Northwestern University for disbursement over a five year period beginning in July 1946. Brownell continued as the nominal director of the Montana Study through 1946, but actually turned over the day-to-day operations of the Study to others, and returned to his teaching position at Northwestern. Ostensibly, RF made the grant to stimulate the educational process of training specialists in community welfare and life. This program would serve the interests of the humanities by supplying "teachers and interpretive writers on American life. . . . Studies of a special nature will deal with the arts, architecture, and contemporary ideas affecting the life of the people." Students would take courses structured around the small community concept and participate in an internship or study of a particular community or region in which they hoped to be active after the completion of their studies. The most important consequence of the whole project, however, turned out to be releasing Brownell from his normal teaching load, allowing him time to conduct field work and structure intensive periods of writing. Additionally, Brownell indicated that he wanted to remain in a position of leadership in the community movement, but without the incessant administrative and funding battles. More evidence for the view that this RF grant was a vehicle primarily for Brownell, and only secondarily for the small community movement emerged from the appropriations statement itself: "it being understood that if for any reason Professor Brownell ceases to be in active direction of this program, there shall be no commitment for more than one year and the situation will be reviewed by Northwestern University and the Foundation." The deal for Brownell was not particularly self-serving, however, because he voluntarily gave up his salary with the Montana Study and allowed it to be used for people taking over that work.⁵⁷

Social innovators are almost by definition on the "cutting edge" of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes concerned with cultural change. Brownell himself gave some indication of the new

directions of his community contributions when he said that he wanted to do good work "in that no-man's land where philosophy, the humanities, education and social life join one another." He believed that what he termed the "philosophy of the community" would be located at the nexus of that interdisciplinary matrix where the subjects of time-honored knowledge cross-fertilized with culturally constructive discoveries of the present. He concluded that the future of American culture and democracy required individual involvement in the making of decisions about culture coming out of a small community perspective, not based on an ideology of "rugged individualism" or the action of the isolated individual in mass society. "Both educational thinking and philosophy today are oriented around a concept of the individual and individual value that is inadequate in meeting the problems and disasters of human living in the modern world. This is shown culturally in the parallel and complementary doctrines of 'individualism' and 'mass organization' which together have given structure to an era of unexampled power, ferocity, and destruction of human values." Brownell also pointed the finger of blame at urbanism, which was a movement toward the "massed organization of special interest groups where the human being is not a cultural, spiritual or operational whole." Without a cultural transformation, even the very survival of the Western world was in jeopardy. This change implied an "educational, technological, industrial, artistic, and religious reorientation. The answer to the modern dilemma, so far as there is an answer, lies in our ability to stabilize and enrich the human community."⁵⁸

For eight years Brownell took this critique "on the road" by keeping up an impressive schedule of conferences, lectures, addresses, visits to community projects, correspondence, and informal meetings with notables in the field including Arthur Morgan, Ralph Borsodi, Stanley Hamilton, executive secretary of the Rural Life Association, Richard Poston, then of the University of Washington Extension Division, and John Kolb, Wisconsin rural sociologist. These contacts reflected the diversity of social problem areas which related to

Brownell's main theme of revitalization of the small community in an age of mass society. For example, in an attempt at working on the religious dimension of the problem, he kept up regular communication with Quaker community projects and started a course on the community and its relation to religion at Garrett Biblical Institute in Evanston, Illinois. One of Brownell's pet projects was organizing community singing groups. In this regard, he looked back to the "old days in the middle west" and their "singing schools" which were "social events as well as musical events and had great value in unifying the little communities." Having already been acquainted with the Organic School in Fairhope, Alabama, he financed two singing groups in the town of Fairhope in 1948; significantly, one was for whites, and one was for Negroes. Brownell felt that amateur group singing was a easy way of accessing community togetherness and spirit. "Singing groups of this sort, if they take hold, can be of value in making small communities aware of themselves and of their values."⁵⁹

Another area of culture which posed problems for the small community was modern technology which Brownell addressed in a number of papers and articles. Technology itself was not so much the problem, but "the failure to build to the human scale or to recognize the balance in human values" constituted the destabilizing aspect of technology. People allowed the beneficence of technology to delude them into thinking that there existed no limits to man's expansion into the environment or limits on human ambition. Yet, Brownell was no modern Luddite or technological primitive: "No American in his senses will urge the destruction of the city or of the technology which was instrumental in creating it, but today the city's influence and power reach a roaring crescendo far out of balance with the more important, more fundamental and quieter ways of rural life." Naturally his solutions revolved around changes in education and the finding of new social patterns for supporting the family and providing meaningful work for children, all staples of his ideal small community. As functioning examples of these kinds of community-centered educational

experiences, Brownell cited the Danish folk schools with their emphasis on arts and crafts knowledge and hands-on experiences, and certain programs of the 4-H Clubs and the Future Farmers of America. Although he may not have anticipated the appropriate technology movement in all of its themes and ramifications, Brownell did enunciate one of its basic concerns which spoke of the need to force the diminution of technology in the hierarchy of Western values.⁶⁰

Although Brownell did a great deal of speaking and writing during the life of the Northwestern University program, the field project dimension developed very slowly and ultimately produced meager results. In time more experienced students were expected to make greater progress in the communities or community areas they chose to study. But very little was produced in the student-run studies (generally of Wisconsin towns). One such study of Bristol, Wisconsin, for example, never really got beyond the basic conclusions that small towns and their values were essential to American democracy, and that they needed "stabilization and enrichment." Brownell did mention some of his more promising students in his correspondence, but all these seem to have eventually drifted away out of the community field.⁶¹

By 1951, the student field projects component had been canceled and Brownell moved more so into writing on the community. His major work on the small community, The Human Community, had been published in 1950 and he worked steadily on The College and the Community, later published in 1952. In that same year, Brownell accepted the directorship of Area Services at Southern Illinois University. He thought it could become the most important project in the country on the integration of higher education and the small community. This move effectively ended the community training program at Northwestern University, and set the stage for Brownell's involvement in the southern Illinois region. Furthermore, it hastened the partial modification of the Montana Study methodology and the

rise of what came to be recognized as area agencies for community development, with state governments taking on more responsibility for the community welfare of their citizens.⁶²

Officials at Southern Illinois University (SIU) created one such area agency for community development in 1951, the Area Services Office (ASO), at its campus in Carbondale, Illinois. This decision emerged out of a plethora of programs begun since World War II, all of which aimed at revitalizing the southernmost thirty-one counties of Illinois. Various groups including the Chamber of Commerce, citizen councils, academic committees, and community consultants all tried to ameliorate the region's relative poverty, low educational scores, lack of cultural resources, and low citizen morale by advocating the strategy of recruiting new factories to provide the economic activity that seemed to be the underlying cause of the regional predicament. But few new industries located there, and the singlemindedness exhibited by citizens toward the approach of luring factories to the region proved counterproductive because it blinded them to the comprehensive nature of the problem. Community organizer Richard Poston observed that the "gradually increasing drabness of the small towns and the local patterns of social organization have operated to stifle initiative, to suppress new leadership, and to impede the daring of new ideas." Neither time-worn realism nor the false optimism of old-fashioned boosterism were adequate to the solution of southern Illinois' problems.⁶³

In the course of Brownell's work in the Northwestern University community program, he became acquainted with the evolving interest in community development at Southern Illinois University. In 1952, SIU officials turned to Brownell to get the program going and appointed him acting director of ASO; later in the same year the SIU president and trustees approved an Area Services Plan authored by Brownell to take shape over six years and employ forty-two staff members. Brownell's enthusiasm for the integration of community development with institutions of higher education was evident when he called ASO the "most revolutionary of Southern's educational programs." The program would collect data

on the region, coordinate all off-campus activities except formal coursework, bring together all research on southern Illinois done by staff members, develop projects to enhance and revitalize the tourism industry, advise various economic and business developments, and in general "stabilize and enrich the course of living in this region by bringing the University into a closer and more functional relationship with the communities there." In response to Brownell's belief that the answer to these problems was an educative one affecting the complete life of the community group, he played the leading role in organizing the Department of Community Development (DCD) in 1953, the action arm of ASO.⁶⁴

Few observers disagreed that the need for cultural uplift in southern Illinois was acute; Brownell described it as "socially a burned-over country. The signs of it are everywhere, nor is it possible, as in the southern states, to offer war as extenuation. It is a tired land. The people are silent. In many of the things that count, southern Illinois is far behind the rest of the state. Her wealth is less, her income lower. Her educational level is lower and so also are the levels of employment and wages. Her services are relatively poor, her buildings and plant often decrepit. Her fields rarely smile; her soil is unresponsive to the ancient demands of those who till it." The question remained, however, how revitalization should best proceed? That query was answered definitively by the appointment of Richard Poston to the directorship of the DCD in 1955. He brought an unswerving dedication to Brownell's community study group methodology developed in the Montana Study plus a commitment to a "bottom-up" approach which accepted the regional concept but relegated it to a secondary position. He directed that the program begin at the local level despite the inherent difficulties of such a policy. "The policy of concentrating on an individual community by community basis [sic] will in the long run create a much more solid foundation for the building of an effective area-level operation, and ultimately will lead to a great deal more actual regional development than would otherwise be possible." Poston advocated the creation of a network of "model towns" or "demonstration communities" which would serve

as examples of what communities could be--what he believed they had been in the past. His conviction in a golden age in America came through clearly: "There was a time in America when democracy operated in an atmosphere of town meetings, small communities, and face-to-face relationships. Social science was in the act of living. Cooperation and group discussion, civic responsibility, and community pride did not have to be taught. They were a part of life. It was a simple life--intimately human, warm, personal." The decentralized society was essential in the maintenance of democracy, because people created freedom in small communities, and freedom in turn constituted a vital pillar of democracy.⁶⁵

Yet Poston did not ignore the regional concept; many problems like those associated primarily with technological changes were well beyond the reach of any one or group of communities. He observed that much action, including legislative, was required at state and national levels too. "Therefore, the policy of the Department has not been to exclude regional operations, but simply to delay [them] until a solid local foundation for such operations could be built through the community development operations conducted at the local level." The "total community development process," for which Poston was responsible, basically incorporated Brownell's idea of an informal community study group with its handful of special issue reporting committees, and expanded the number of committees to include just about every conceivable community topic like population, churches, the library, health, and even publicity. These special issue committees would not only be linked to each other and the general community group, but also to other like committees in the whole region. Therefore, the DCD accepted a number of regional responsibilities, one of which was to hold regional conferences for not only towns involved in community development, but also for all the participants from the various development committees. So, for example, an entire conference might be dedicated to the people involved in the government committees. In addition, the DCD hosted conferences for everyone of the region or subregion, as the case might have been, whether or not their community chose to participate

in the community development program. Another responsibility taken on by the DCD was the circulation of a community development news bulletin in order to better inform the public about the successes and pitfalls of community development in their area. The DCD also reached out to professional and special interest groups which sometimes possessed the ability to positively influence community development in ways the DCD was unable to, such as social welfare personnel, ministerial groups, and chamber of commerce groups. Furthermore, the DCD developed traveling panels and clinics, exhibits, and special programs delivered through the mass media and a speakers bureau to present its message to even more people. Finally, the DCD proposed to work cooperatively with established private, semi-public, and public institutions like other departments at SUI, volunteer organizations, private companies, and state and federal governments. To this end, the DCD cited its role in the establishment of the Southern Illinois Recreation Committee and the Shawnee Hills Recreation Association.⁶⁶

On the level of the individual community, the approach was much the same as the group study method the Montana Study had made famous. Even the printed material used for group study was adapted from the study guide Life in Montana, with moderate changes in the geographical, historical, and economic background material to make it appropriate to southern Illinois. Life in Southern Illinois, as seen in a small community, as it was then called, directed that "the members of this group will sit around a table together and try to acquaint themselves with their own community and its problems. They will be persons of different beliefs, different occupations, different training, but they will study the common problems of their community and try to act cooperatively towards their solution. So long as people will talk together as neighbors in the communities of America, the democratic way of life will endure." It was just that simple! Yet it was an idea which was predicated on reversing an ominous trend in American society--changing a nation of spectators into a nation of knowledgeable cooperators. Poston cried out that becoming a nation of spectators

"[was] leaving our Republic weak and flabby; it is making us a hypocrite before a world in which we are attempting to demonstrate the strength of our American ideals." America would have difficulty winning the Cold War, the Korean War, and the struggle for the hearts and minds of Third World people if it did not redevelop its basic traditions and principles on the basis of communities which utilized the best of the past and the present to create a refashioned American ideal. In Brownell's words, "The modern small town can be very different from the small town of half a century ago. It can have most of the advantages of the modern world and few of the disadvantages of mass society and urban civilization." The answer, then, would be found in harnessing the old pioneer spirit to the new capacities of modern times. The work required a new balance between the individual and society, the locale and the larger territory. According to Brownell, "Many of us tend to recede into an individual or family isolation not unlike that of our pioneer ancestors. This can be good or bad--bad, if it takes the form of unwillingness or inability to cooperate ('let someone else do it')--good, if it makes us more self-sufficient as individuals, as families, as a community and as a region."⁶⁷

Certainly the most outstanding example of a community which, having participated in the DCD's program, became simultaneously more self-reliant, yet less smug was the "success story" of the ironically named town of Eldorado. In 1953, its remaining 4,075 citizens were on the verge of a devolution from a town of some standing in the region to an emasculated village with no direction and no basis for hope. When nearby coal mines closed, it lost its main industry and population began to stream away. Apathy, disunity, and confusion set in among the people, including its leaders. In a state of mind approaching desperation, a small group of citizens organized a census of the community's assets, physical and human. This group generated a feeling of unity and cohesiveness through the process of compiling the census. They took this data to a community-wide meeting where the formal process of community study according to the DCD was adopted. Multiple committees were formed to

investigate every aspect of the town's life. Poston estimated that over half of the town's residents took part in some aspect of the study. At that point, conclusions of the study committees were translated into specific action projects which upon their completion, would improve the town in some tangible way and provide rapid feedback to all concerned on how well they were doing at community development. On May, 1954, the community started to implement the list of projects collectively decided upon: "A renovated city hall, a new youth recreation center, modernization of housing, the destruction of outdoor privies, the passage of a bond issue for new school construction, scores of beautification projects, a community-wide home and style show to stimulate local retail trade, improvements in the library, an agricultural development program, and the machinery for bringing about industrialization [in the community]." Then Eldorado celebrated its new-found success with the largest parade in southern Illinois history. After the parade, residents initiated the pledged projects with the creation of a park out of a dumping ground pock-marked by large unsanitary holes. With the holes filled in, the town set up a granite stone commemorating their collective efforts. The inscription read "Democracy At Work 1954." The notoriety of the accomplishments even gained the attention of Edward R. Murrow's television show "See It Now," which described how the community had rehabilitated itself.⁶⁸

After three and one-half years of operation, DCD published a progress report detailing its activities. Ten communities began the program with a total population of over 56,000 people. In that time period, 2700 community meetings were held, which eventuated in several hundred worthwhile action projects. DCD sponsored fourteen general conferences of a regional nature, plus it contributed to two special conferences on economic development, one organized by Congressman Kenneth Gray in January 1956, and the other by Governor William Stratton in March 1956. The overall program received a great deal of media attention on all levels from local to international, in part due to the fact its staff delivered 528 public addresses. Only a small proportion of the media coverage was overly negative, such

as the criticism leveled at SIU in 1957 by the Chicago Daily News, which charged it with duplication of services, "rinky-dink" courses, constant budget expansion, and a questionable emphasis on community development, especially when there existed so many agencies already at least tangentially involved with that area. DCD responded that it was still in the exploratory and experimental stages of its evolution, and that its regional operations would expand rapidly in the near future. In order to facilitate this expanded level of activity, DCD conducted fifteen leadership training workshops with a total enrollment of 349 people. In June, 1956, established a special facility called the Community Development Institute, to train people in the field of community development and earn their Bachelor's degree. In terms of special technical assistance, economic development continued as a high priority dimension of DCD mission. Technical advice was offered in terms of plant location, development of home industry, retail trade, and agriculture. The industrial division organized later than other areas and so could only claim to have brought in four new factories to the area. DCD found the competition for new manufacturing plants stiff, and lost a major luggage maker as a prospect and its temporary branch plant too. Other economic development paid off in agriculture with the organization of a tomato cooperative. The processing cooperative employed fifty-nine people and expanded after its first year of operation. Additional agriculture activity included workshops and demonstrations in soil testing, pasture renovation, tree planting, and sheep raising in conjunction with state and federal farm agencies. The program also generated much miscellaneous activity, most of it relating to research reports on industrial development, retail trade, and the history of southern Illinois. Furthermore, staff members completed detailed summaries of each of the community development programs entered into by DCD. In contrast to the Montana Study, DCD invested very little time in community pageants, plays, or musical productions. Although in conjunction with the development program in the town of Chester, the Department helped organize a one-week community arts festival in 1954.⁶⁹

Despite extensive research, organization, and a reasonable amount of success in its early years of operation, DCD still faced declining small communities and the prospect of more towns dying out completely as the decade of the fifties ended. Brownell lamented "They [students of the problem] feel that declines of this sort are a vicious downward spiral which end in societal extinction and an empty land." The Area Services Office continued operations as a separate entity until 1965, when it was folded into the state bureaucracy. On the federal level, community specialists lobbied intently for an area redevelopment administration which would employ a combined federal-state-local approach to regional developmental problems. Illinois Senator Paul Douglas introduced such a bill in 1956, which passed the Senate, but was defeated in the House. By 1958, both houses of Congress passed essentially the same bill, but President Eisenhower vetoed it. A legislative plan to reach pockets of poverty would have to wait for the 1960s, especially Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and Michael Harrington's The Other America, which would expose poverty and feeble communities almost right under the noses of Congresspeople who trumpeted the general achievement of the American Dream for all and in every part of the nation.⁷⁰

To the extent that regionalism evolved out of the concept of sectionalism, it has existed in American culture for some time. Regional enthusiasts utilized it in a myriad of ways and for a plethora of purposes. In the twenties and thirties, agrarians, decentralists, and Mumfordians all promulgated plans which cast the regional doctrine as a backdrop against which they played out their schemes for the recreation of an ideal, organic society. They and others wished for a method of communitarian renaissance at once objective and precise like science, and yet one that would respond to the needs and aspirations of the humanities at their best. The incalculable requirements of the soul would be fused with rational planning, efficient production, and an ecological sense of interdependency, a balance of forces, and process. Greed, sloth, envy, hatred, and fear would be banished on a wave of cooperativeness, commonality, and community-mindedness arising out of the regional

commonwealth. In the thirties, both physical and social scientists began to incorporate principles from the nascent science of ecology into the regional concept. Biologist Paul Sears gave structure to this idea when he pointed out that "Great endeavors, from the Promised Land to Rural Resettlement, have failed, not from lack of the higher human attributes, but because these attributes were not used to establish a sound physical basis for meeting our animal needs. . . . The idea of balance--of a flexible system of give-and-take--seems implicit throughout nature. . . . the laws of community development suggest that a stable human community must develop collaboration and the chance for wholesome individual activity for people of the most diverse roles." The regional vision became potentially a more powerful force for cultural change in the hands of an influential federal bureaucrat like Arthur Morgan. For him, regionalism was not only a social scientific methodology, but a means to utopia--communities safely ensconced in their appropriate cultural niches, reaping the benefits of physical, geographic, moral, and social order. As regionalist sociologist Howard Odum noted, "The great significance of regionalism, then, in addition to its explanatory value, is its logical place in the next natural steps in the development of the nation such as to obviate unrealistic all-inclusive mechanical 'isms' and plans so often offered as substitutes for fundamental processes and extensions of the American order." Regionalism partook of natural, universal laws which also happened to be part of the foundation of the American Dream and its concomitant democracy.⁷¹

Subsequent interpreters of regionalism like Kraenzel, Thomson, and the other institutional regionalists emphasized the Janus-faced nature of human cultural life--at once looking toward the locale and the larger territorial unit. The region was itself comprised of sub-regions and locales, but it simultaneously deferred to the general whole, or the nation in the American context. Later regionalists like Brownell, Poston, and Morgan after his TVA experience, narrowed the focus of regionalism down to the small community; it was Mumford's organic community now in the guise of the small town. In fact, the region

became more of a heuristic device by which communities could be better understood and aided in their quest for rehabilitation and revitalization. The times were not favorable to experimental, utopian communities; but, the days of experimental programs in community development were just beginning. The question which faced small community advocates was not how rural culture, which largely sustained small communities, could be maintained as a significant minority subculture, but how it could be saved from substantial marginalization and possible disappearance. Radicalism and pure utopian flights of fancy largely gave way to professionalism, organizations, and bureaucratic and administrative maneuverings in response to the assessments and duties levied by a mass society which now wrote the rules by which Americans had to abide. For the most part, small community advocates stopped fighting "city hall," and sought it as an ally capable of being persuaded of the necessity of the small community in mid-century American society.

NOTES

1. Lewis Mumford, "Toward a New Regionalism," New Republic 66 (March 25, 1931): 157; Robert Dorman, Revolt of the Provinces (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 284-285; Carey McWilliams, Ill Fares the Land (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1942), 387-388. McWilliams played the regionalist hand throughout the 1940s, specifically latching onto the prospect of a TVA-like development for the Columbia River Valley. See "The Northwest Needs a CVA," The Nation 160 (June 2, 1945): 622-623.

2. David Cushman Coyle, Roads to a New America (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1938) and Ralph L. Wood, America Reborn: A Plan for Decentralization (New York: Longmans, Green, Co., 1939). For the idea of regionalism as developmental technique see John L. Thomas, "Lewis Mumford: Regionalist Historian," Reviews in American History 16 (March 1988): 162; the other definition of regionalism which arose at this time as the ideology of the organic community and alternative to the modern dominant cultural paradigm is well covered in Dorman's Revolt of the Provinces. Donald Davidson, The Attack on Leviathan: Regionalism and Nationalism in the United States (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1938); Donald Davidson, review of Roads to a New America, by David Cushman Coyle, in Free America 3, no. 2 (February 1939): 20. Examples of regionalism, both early and late, are not hard to come by: Walter Prescott Webb, Divided We Stand: The Crisis of a Frontierless Democracy (New York, Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1937), Royce Henderson Knapp, American Regionalism and Social Education (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), Merrill Jensen, ed., American Regionalism (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), and Carle C. Zimmerman and Richard E. Du Wors, Graphic Regional Sociology (Cambridge: Phillips Book Store, 1952).

3. Angeline Bouchard, "An American Regional Pattern," Free America 2, no. 7 (July 1938): 12-15.

4. Raymond Fosdick, The Story of the Rockefeller Foundation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 256; Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report, 1941, 262.

5. Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report, 1941, 41-44; Fosdick, 252-256, 265.

6. Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report, 1942, 6-10, 202-203; Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report, 1943, 201-202; the extensiveness of the RF program is seen in how RF regional conferences directly or indirectly spurred further RF regional grants to the

Huntington Library (Southwest Pacific Coast), University of Wisconsin (American Studies), University of Montana (Regional Studies), University of Alberta (Folklore Studies), Texas Historical Association, University of Oklahoma (Southwest Studies), University of Saskatchewan (Great Plains Studies), University of New Brunswick (Maritime Studies), Michigan State University, Newberry Library, University of Minnesota, and the Canadian Humanities Research Council. The large institutional character of the day was observed by writers of many different perspectives like William H. Whyte in The Organization Man, C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite, David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd, and later, Daniel Bell in The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism.

7. "RF Special Grant in Aid Fund for Regional Studies," 1942-1943, folder 3296, box 276, series 200, Record Group 1.1, Rockefeller Foundation Archives, Rockefeller Archive Center, North Tarrytown, New York (hereafter designated RFA, RAC).

8. Other institutions besides the RF had ongoing regional studies including the United States Department of Agriculture, Montana State College, and the Carnegie Corporation. "RF Appropriations to the Great Plains Conference and the Northern Great Plains Studies," 1942-1944, p. 1-3, folder 3296, box 276, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.

9. Marshall to Smith, May 8, 1942 and May 21, 1942, folder 2757, box 231, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC; Stevens quoted in "RF Appropriations to the Great Plains Conference and the Northern Great Plains Studies," p.3-5; Thomson quoted in "Great Plains Studies Survey," July 18, 1942, and Smith to Marshall, August 30, 1942, both in folder 2758, box 231, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.

10. Carl F. Kraenzel, Watson Thomson, and Glenn H. Craig, The Northern Plains in a World of Change (Canada: Gregory-Cartwright, 1942), 1, 5; Roosevelt quoted in Elmer Starch, "The Great Plains--Missouri Valley Region," in Regionalism in America, ed. Merrill Jensen (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1951), 348; Howard Odum and Harry Estill Moore, American Regionalism (New York: Henry Holt, 1938), 574.

11. "RF Appropriations to the Great Plains," p.5; United States Department of Agriculture, Water, Land and People, 1941, folder 3139, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.

12. Marshall to Corbett, July 20, 1942, Corbett to Marshall, August 27, 1942, Thomson to Marshall, August 13, 1942, all from folder 3140, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.

13. "Saskatoon Conference," September 24-25, 1942, folder 3142, box 363, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC; "Northern Great Plains Conference," folder 3300, box 277, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.

14. Kraenzel, Thomson, and Craig, 53, 23.

15. Ibid., 24.
16. Ibid., 14-16.
17. Ibid., 28-30.
18. Ibid., 30-32; "Conference on the Northern Plains Region," September 24-25, 1942, p. 14, folder 3147, box 264, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.
19. Kraenzel, Thomson, and Craig, 47-54.
20. Ibid., 59-75, 82.
21. Ibid., 100, 101.
22. Ibid., 102, 103.
23. Ibid., 127-134.
24. Ibid., 137-147.
25. Ibid., 151-162.
26. Ibid., 171, 177.
27. Ibid., 185.
28. "RF Appropriations to the Great Plains," p. 6-7; Thomson to Marshall, November 2, 1942, Kraenzel to Marshall, February 23, 1943, both from folder 3143, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC; Marshall to Johnston, October 30, 1942, folder 3138, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC; Marshall to Johnston, March 31, 1943, folder 3139, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.
29. Eberle to Marshall, April 1, 1943, Marshall to Johnston, March 22, 1943, Stevens to Eberle, March 25, 1943, Johnston to The Evening Huronite, February 24, 1943, all from folder 3139, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.
30. Smith to Marshall, January 23, 1943, Nelson to Kraenzel, January 21, 1943, Elmer Roper, editorial in Peoples' Weekly, February 30, 1943, Dykhuizen to Thomson, March 30, 1943, all from folder 3144, box 263, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.
31. "RF Appropriations to the Great Plains," p. 9; Marshall to Kraenzel, February 17, 1944, folder 3145, box 264, series 200, RG 1.1, RFA, RAC.

32. Quoted in "RF Appropriations to the Great Plains," p. 10; "RF Appropriations to Montana State University for Regional Studies 1944-1947," p. 1-2, folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG1.2, RFA, RAC; Richard Waverly Poston, Small Town Renaissance (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 1-10.

33. "RF Appropriations to Montana State University," p. 2; Stevens to Melby, May 24, 1943, Merriam to Stevens, August 16, 1943, Melby to Stevens, September 4, 1943, Melby to Marshall, October 19, 1943, Marshall to Melby, October 5, 1943, Melby to Marshall, January 4, 1944, all from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

34. Marshall to Melby, October 25, 1943, Melby quoted in "Memorandum to the Rockefeller Foundation," January 4, 1944, p. 1-2, both from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

35. RF to Melby, March 13, 1944, Melby to Marshall, March 21, 1944, both from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Poston, 21-22. The University of Montana system, created in 1943, consisted of the Montana State University at Missoula, the Montana State College at Bozeman, the School of Mines at Butte, the Montana State Normal College at Dillon, the Eastern Montana State Normal College at Billings, and the Northern Montana College at Havre.

36. Poston, 23; "Conference on the Arts and Sciences College," May 19-21, 1944, folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

37. Melby to Marshall, June 15, 1944, Melby to Marshall, June 23, 1944, Brownell to Stevens, July 6, 1944, Bownell to Stevens, June 28, 1944, all from folder 3330.82, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; "Montana Study Progress Report," December 7, 1945, folder 3330.84, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

38. Brownell to Renne, July 13, 1944, Brownell to Marshall, July 15, 1944, "Preliminary Statement on the Montana Study," September 30, 1944, all from folder 3330.83, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

39. Baker Brownell, "The Montana Study Groups,:" 1946, p. 1, Trustees Bulletin, "A State Takes Stock of Itself," October 1946, p. 3-5, both from folder 3330.85, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Baker Brownell, Joseph Kinsey Howard, and Paul Meadows, Life in Montana: as Seen in Lonepine, a Small Community (Missoula, Montana: The Montana Study, 1945).

40. Baker Brownell, "The Montana Study," School and Society 60 (December 16, 1944): 397-398; Poston, 72-75; Brownell, "The Montana Study Groups," 2; Brownell to Melby, June 26, 1944, folder 1, box 28, Baker Brownell Papers, Northwestern University Archives.

41. Brownell, "The Montana Study," 399; Poston, 72-78; Thomas B. Colwell, Jr., explores Brownell's concept of decadence in "Baker Brownell's Philosophy of Community and its Educational Implications," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1968), 35-36; Baker Brownell, The Human Community (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 3, 160-164, 292; Brownell, "The Montana Study Groups," 6.
42. Brownell, "The Montana Study Groups," 1-6.
43. Poston, 49-63; Brownell, "The Montana Study Groups," 2-3.
44. Ibid.
45. Bert Hansen, "An Evaluation of the Montana Study," Journal of Higher Education 20 (January 1949): 18-27.
46. Poston, 27-28.
47. Ibid., 30-31; Joseph Kinsey Howard, "The Montana Twins in Trouble?," Harper's Magazine 189 (September 1944): 334-342.
48. Stevens to Brownell, October 23, 1944, Fosdick to Towne, November 8, 1944, both from folder 3330.83, box 381, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.
49. Governor Ford quoted in Poston, 65-71; Brownell to Stevens, January 20, 1945, Dicky to Ross, August 1, 1945, Brownell to Stevens, November 7, 1945, all from folder 3330.84, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Joseph Kinsey Howard, "Golden River," Harper's Magazine 190 (May 1945): 511-523.
50. Brownell to Stevens, January 1, 1945, folder 3330.84, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Poston, 128-137.
51. Poston, 138-144; Stevens to Brownell, January 3, 1946, folder 3330.85, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.
52. Poston, 186; "RF Appropriations to Montana State University," p. 5.
53. Poston, 188-190; "Proposal for a Writer's Conference," January 2, 1948, "Proposal for a Montana Institute," November 17, 1947, Brownell to Stevens, January 18, 1948, Brownell to Stevens, January 28, 1948, Selke to Stevens, July 24, 1948, "Report of the Second Annual University Institute for Social Welfare, July 26, 1948, all from folder 3330.87, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Stevens to Selke, October 14, 1949, McFarland to Fahs, September 12, 1951, both from folder 3330.88, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

54. Brownell to Stevens, November 24, 1947, Brownell to Stevens, October 15, 1947, both from folder 3330.86, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Howard to Stevens, September 12, 1949, Poston to Marshall, January 30, 1951, Marshall to Poston, February 2, 1951, all from folder 3330.88, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

55. Brownell to Marshall, April 1, 1946, folder 3330.85, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

56. "RF Appropriation to Northwestern University," May 17, 1946, p. 1, folder 3446, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

57. Ibid., 1-2. As testament to his central leadership position in the small community movement, Elizabeth Wright Evans of the Seattle Times called Brownell one who has given concrete contributions to small communities, "perhaps more than any other living persons." "Advocate of the Small Community," April 13, 1947, folder 3446, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

58. Brownell to Synder, February 11, 1946, Marshall to Brownell, March 22, 1946, "Eighth Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion," September 1947, p. 20, all from folder 3446, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; "RF Appropriation to Northwestern University," p. 2.

59. Baker Brownell, "Progress Report on Northwestern University Project," 1948 and 1949, folder 3446, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

60. Baker Brownell, "Technology and the Human Limit," Journal of Higher Education 20 (March 1949): 121; Evans, "Advocate of the Small Town."

61. Brownell, "Progress Report," 1946-1947, folder 3446, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; "Bristol Project," 1947, folder 13, box 54, Baker Brownell Papers, Northwestern University Archives.

62. Brownell, "Progress Report," 1951-1952, Brownell to Fahs, June 8, 1953, both from folder 3447, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.

63. Department of Community Development, A Report on the Plans and Operations of the Department of Community Development (Carbondale, Illinois: Department of Community Development, 1957), 5.

64. Baker Brownell, The Other Illinois (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, 1958), 242; "Filing Guide," Area Services Collection, 75-1, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, hereafter designated as SIU; Tudor to Beers, July 15, 1952, folder Sociological Society-Rural, 1952-53, box 1, Area Services Collection, 75-1, SIU;

Baker Brownell, "The Area Services Plan," September 1, 1952, folder History SIU-Area Services, box 12, Area Services Collection, 75-1, SIU.

65. Brownell, The Other Illinois, 151; Department of Community Development, 22-23; Richard Waverly Poston, Democracy Is You (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), 4-5.

66. Department of Community Development, 24, 25-32.

67. Baker Brownell and Jo Ann Bitzer, Life in Southern Illinois, as seen in a small community (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1953), iii, 104, 65; Poston, Democracy Is You, 4.

68. Richard Poston, "A Job for all of Us," October 1954, folder Area Services 1947-1965, box 46, Area Services Collection, 75-1, SIU.

69. Department of Community Development, 72-84. In 1954, Arthur Morgan suggested setting up a Small Business Institute to train new leadership and coordinate DCD's actions with existing businesses and leaders. Many of his ideas were incorporated into the eventual Community Development Institute (Brownell, The Other Illinois, 240). Chicago Daily News, 1957, folder SIU-criticism, box 46, Area Services Collection, 75-1, SIU.

70. Baker Brownell, "The Area Services Plan," September 1, 1952, folder History-SIU-Area Services, box 12, Area Services Collection, 75-1, SIU; Brownell, The Other Illinois, 150; "Fact Sheet on Area Redevelopment," folder Area Redevelopment 1958-1959, box 5, Area Services Collection, 75-1, SIU.

71. Paul B. Sears, "The Ecology of City and Country," in Cities Are Abnormal, ed. Elmer T. Peterson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 28, 38, 53; Odum and Moore, viii.

CHAPTER 4
THE SMALL COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

In 1939, sociologist Robert S. Lynd, already famous for his co-authorship of the classic community studies of Middletown (1929) and Middletown in Transition (1937), published a scathing critique of narrowly empirical and value-free research called Knowledge For What?: The Place of Social Science in American Culture. Lynd, like many other American observers of the world situation, wrote out of a deep-seated conviction that American culture was in crisis, and that its democratic foundations were threatened by the advancing interests and ideology of worldwide Fascism. Moreover, the specter of armageddon hung over the entire world, potentially pitting the forces of Fascism against the Western democracies, with Soviet Communism a constant irritant and ideological competitor. Additionally, Lynd believed that social science itself was in crisis, and it had failed to assist an American culture in desperate need of intelligent and reasoned guidance. The role of social science was clear: "[it] is not a scholarly arcanum, but an organized part of the culture which exists to help man in continually understanding and rebuilding his culture." Beset by the continuing economic predicament, people also faced possible military, political, and even intellectual (cultural) upheavals due to the impending worldwide conflict and the apparent inability of conventional belief systems to provide suitable answers to the mounting array of problems. In this respect, Lynd approvingly quoted scholar James T. Shotwell as saying that "'the anarchy we are living in today' [is] 'the most dangerous since the fall of Rome.'" Related to this, Lynd's concern extended to the fate of the American community caught in the transformational maelstrom of the genesis of mass society. Such a society, in the words of present-day sociologist Larry Lyon, "is a standardized, homogeneous, society devoid of major

ethnic and class divisions and, most importantly for the community, devoid of substantial regional and local variation." Lynd may not have defined mass society so precisely, but undoubtedly he was aware of it and some of its implications for community.¹

Lynd pointed to problems which ran to the marrow of American culture and its community life. Anticipating William H. Whyte's argument in the The Organization Man (1957), Lynd observed that linking people's identities to their jobs was a "fragile basis for social cohesion." The rise of mass society contributed to a diminution of a satisfying community life. "So we burst out periodically in sex, drinking, hard-driving week-ends, and gusts of safe, standardized feeling at the movies and football games. Mickey Mouse and Charlie McCarthy tend to displace Uncle Sam and local symbols as repositories of common sentiment." They are provocative, novel, and attractive, but gain existence mainly by default. "They offer little identification of our personal rhythms of feeling with the deeper purposes of the culture as a whole and with our common goals as members of it. No large society can long exist which is careless of this element of community in feeling and purpose." How could Americans direct changes fast enough to counter dictatorships on the march, 10,000,000 unemployed, new technologies leaping past their attendant social structures, and democracies seemingly adrift "to enable basic human values to survive?" What social processes would strengthen community integration, and its connection to democratic action? Lynd offered a new religious (civic or community) sensibility to ameliorate the disjunctions of culture in a mass society, where "common loyalties blur rapidly as they leave 'myself and my family' and proceed out into the larger community. In the relative vacuum that 'community' becomes under these circumstances, we depend upon various slogans imposed upon us from above, rather than upon loyalties growing richly in the soil of daily living. No amount of patriotism enforced by international insecurity, or of local slogans fostered by Rotary and Chamber of Commerce to fortify My Town's business against Your Town, can supply this need for emotionally rich common sentiments." He concluded that social

scientists, and in fact, the whole liberal political tradition, had ignored the practical implications of the communitarian nature of society, and that this matter could wait no longer. More planning and centralized control were compatible with democracy. But the transformation of American society along more openly socialistic lines would not be an easy task, because as historian William Graebner posits, "uncertainty reigned" in the forties. "Americans agonized over the nature of man, over an appropriate role for science and the expert, over the dangers of 'mass culture,' over the function of chance in human affairs, over the relative importance of reason and emotion, over whether the solutions to the dilemmas of the modern world were in the field of organization . . . or in the realm of the self."²

Lynd was not the first social scientist, however, to express concern about the direction of American culture and the community, small or otherwise. Rural sociologists, practitioners of an indigenous American discipline, began searching for an understanding of the changing conditions of rural life around the turn-of-the-century. The juxtaposition of a chronically unstable agricultural sector with a relatively prosperous manufacturing economy caused leaders with ties to rural society to study ways of putting rural life on a more equal level with urban life. As part of the Progressive reform movement of the times, President Theodore Roosevelt eagerly appointed the Commission on Country Life in 1908. In their hurried report, the commissioners cited many deficiencies of rural life: farmers lacked modern agricultural knowledge that could help them out of a cycle of poverty and poor farming practices; a large need for additional credit; a lack of education relevant to rural society, health services, transportation infrastructure, and good leadership; misuse of soil and other natural resources; and the demoralizing isolation experienced by rural dwellers, especially farm women. Participants in the Country Life Movement desired changes in rural culture which amounted to a total revolution. Farmers should make modern science the basis of agriculture--make farming a business; rural society should emulate the developing urban order, efficiencies, and bureaucratic organizations. Land-grant colleges should take the lead

in disseminating practical information to farmers and conduct surveys of agricultural needs. Community organization should move away from neighborhood identifications to the governments and associations found in the larger towns, later given definition in the form of the rural trade area by early rural sociologist Charles Galpin in his term "rurban." Underlying these suggestions for modernization were assumptions of rural anarchy and moral degeneracy. Regardless of the degree to which farms were mechanized and extension services provided, *Country Life* advocates believed that the whole project turned on better education for people of all ages--country schools should be replaced by consolidated schools and adults should organize farm bureaus and support farm demonstrations by experts.³

The progenitors of rural sociology were not so much scholarly professionals, but "herald-evangelists" as sociologist Lowry Nelson calls them, who acted largely as apologists for a better rural life, while retaining most traditional rural values. As both boosters of the agrarian community and members of the Commission on Country Life, Liberty Hyde Bailey and Kenyon Butterfield exemplified the somewhat sentimental, nostalgic, but serious view of the place of rural culture in the overall make-up of American society. From their perspective, it was important that the rural community not be left behind in the general progress and prosperity experienced by society as a whole. Both men hoped for the establishment of a new balance between rural and urban sectors. Bailey, in particular, believed that urban America needed its rural counterpart: "It is doubtful whether a nation of cities could be a democracy." He worried about a lack of rural solidarity: "Lack of this arises from little contact with fellows, from the arrested development due to marked individualism, and from the sterilization of rural institutions consequent on the removal of centers of interest to the towns." But Bailey anticipated that better communications and a more completely settled countryside would create a coherent rural society. He also believed that it was imperative that an educated class develop quickly in the open country in order to bring it to its full potential. "Nowhere will the individuality of personal leadership count for more

than in the country." Nevertheless, all classes and groups had to work together because "Our present greatest need is the development of what may be called 'the community sense.'" Ultimately, on the local level, community cohesiveness would be brought about by the "leadership of some one strong organization."⁴

Kenyon Butterfield did more for rural sociology as a discipline than Bailey, but he similarly sang the praises of rural life, as his most important work, Chapters in Rural Progress (1907), testifies: "City life goes to extremes; country life, while varied, is more even. In the country there is little of large wealth, luxury, and ease; little also of extreme poverty, reeking crime, unutterable filth, moral sewage. Farmers are essentially a middle class and no comparison is fair that does not keep this fact ever in mind." Yet there did exist a farm problem which was "a peculiar problem, demanding special study, a new point of view, and sometimes unique institutions." But the countryside's conservatism should not be mistaken for decadence. Further insights as to the nature of these conditions should be the subject of an organized rural sociological discipline. Butterfield thus called on educators of all types to use everything at their disposal to help rural dwellers; such actions could lift farmers out of their narrow class interests, and combined with the creation of "rural progress federations" would contribute to a rejuvenation of rural communities.⁵

The first truly academic rural sociologists were not nearly as charitable and generous to rural folk as Bailey and Butterfield. Wisconsin sociologist Charles Galpin, for example, stated that "The great fact about farm people is the shift in their thinking and behaving" away from the old faith in the "finality of hard work and a good crop" and more toward the attitudes of consumption, leisure, and humanism. This transformation was seen by most scholars of the community as a positive change; the rural problem had to be solved if American society was to progress.⁶

Rural sociologists endeavored to understand the conditions of rural life by first defining and locating the rural community. Despite being a concept of recent origin, social

scientists produced little unanimity concerning the nature of community. One of the earliest observers, rural sociologist Warren Wilson, developed the "trade area" concept in 1912. This idea accorded with the realization that communities did not usually exist in exact concurrence with map lines or the boundaries of local governmental units. Using Wilson's idea as a base, Galpin built on work by Albion Small, the quantitative methodology of Franklin Giddings, and the early interest in rural society by agricultural economists. Galpin developed the concept of the "rurban community," which consisted of rural trade centers and the open country families which patronized them. Hence, the trade area was seen as the actual community. He assembled his data into The Social Anatomy of an Agricultural Community (1915); this study enabled researchers to see rural associations as discrete units. Galpin was thus one of the earliest scholars to quantitatively define the rural community and devised methods to discover its boundaries. John Kolb carried on Galpin's work to identify smaller neighborhood groups in Wisconsin, based on name/place identification. He concluded that the village was the "service station" to farmers and a community was composed of the village and open-country farmers. Carle Zimmerman and Carl C. Taylor completed similar studies in North Carolina; they offered a more constrained definition of community: "only one class of people with one standard of living inhabiting the same area." Dwight Sanderson and Warren Thompson utilized Galpin's methodology in New York State for not only rural neighborhoods, but urban communities too. They found that all service areas--retail, educational, the church area--all coincided in one community. As late as 1939, Sanderson promulgated the following definition: "A rural community is that form of association maintained between the people, and between their institutions, in a local area in which they live on dispersed farmsteads and in a village which is the center of their common activities." Not only did definitions of community exist in a rich variety, but they barely progressed from sociologist Robert MacIver's early approach to community based on the two components of common interests and a common locale. During the formative period of

community research lasting into the 1930s, most rural sociologists and urban community specialists like Robert Park, Louis Wirth, and other members of the Chicago School spent their time describing and categorizing the structures and populations of various community types, and directed less attention to the community as a shared way of life, its psychological forces, and social power relationships.⁷

Other social scientists, mainly anthropologists, studied mostly primitive communities from the perspective of a total pattern of living, emphasizing shared institutions and values. Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd conducted the most famous and influential modern community study utilizing an ethnological methodology in Middletown: A Study in American Culture (1929). The impetus for the study emerged from an evolving interest in the role of religion and the church in modern urban life. Religious leaders (in this case Protestant) and social reformers joined forces in the Institute of Social and Religious Research in 1923. They proceeded to fund dozens of church and urban studies to ascertain the extent to which the church could be more active and effective in contributing to needed social services. The Institute employed the Lynds to conduct a study of religious and psychological forces operating in a small industrial city, the project to go well beyond the often hurried, highly quantitative surveys previously completed. By their systematic efforts, as historian Richard Jensen noted, "They moved sociology away from the reform-oriented community survey toward a scientific study of culture." Some evidence exists, however, to indicate that the Lynds were not the first scholars to study an American community in the mode of social anthropologists, contrary to what anthropologist Clark Wissler claimed in the forward to Middletown.⁸

The Lynds chose Muncie, Indiana, as the site of their comprehensive investigation into changing American cultural patterns. It turned out to be a major description and analysis of the effects of modernization on a formerly rural-oriented small city in the heart of America. They employed the functional cultural categorization of British anthropologist W. H. R.

Rivers, which delineated six fundamental activities in all cultures: getting a living, making a home, training the young, using leisure, engaging in religious practices, and engaging in community activities. In each of these categories, the Lynds compared and contrasted Muncie of 1890, to the same, but growing small city in 1920. By then its population had risen to 38,000, up from over 11,000 in 1890. Thus, although it could not have been considered much of a small community at either point in time, the Lynd's journalistic style helped to interpret Muncie's residual rural features and values in such a way as to elucidate important general insights into the impact of industrialization and urbanization on smaller-sized American communities in the early twentieth century. In some ways, Muncie's citizens still acted and thought like small town people, even in 1920, but not for long. The massive transformation wrought since 1890 "comprehends for hundreds of American communities the industrial revolution that has descended upon villages and towns, metamorphosing them into a thing of Rotary Clubs, central trade councils, and Chamber of Commerce contests for 'bigger and better' cities."⁹

The Lynd's reportorial style cloaked a subtle cultural calculus by which they "rated" and judged social changes according to their mostly-hidden value hierarchy. For example, when discussing Middletown's loss of many talented people to other cities and its recruitment of "new blood" from its hinterland, the Lynds pointed out that "Nobody knows exactly what such a depletion from above and enrichment from below means to the life of a city. It is, however, pertinent to bear it in mind as a possible factor influencing the energy and quality of all the activities of Middletown, notably the degree of resistance to social change." Much of this "profit and loss" activity occurred in the footnotes, where they revealed something of their theoretical bases. They conceived of the institutional dimension of culture as the driving force in any society, and that those people with access to power and control of institutions would tend to shape the overall look of a community. Not surprisingly, the Lynds selected a simple, but practical two class system of social stratification. Direction for

the local community came largely from the business class which organized and controlled most of the important institutions, and the lower class, the workers, largely followed the lead of the upper class. The Lynds identified the economic and business sphere as the primary institutional source of cultural change. The era of skilled craftsmen with their voluntary associations (unions, clubs, and societies) who lived slow-paced, but rich and rewarding family and civic lives as part of a larger, but familiar community existence, had been replaced by an epoch characterized by routine, specialized machine production done by semi-skilled or unskilled operators who had to work harder and harder, physically and psychologically, just to keep up with the machine and the new consumer-driven money culture. Insecurity, anxiety, and alienation from the community were some of the unwanted effects on the working class. No one from either class knew where the community was going, but most of the business class believed that they had to go forward with the ethic of progress and prosperity. According to the Lynds, a seemingly stable *Gemeinschaft* society was in the process of being replaced by an industrially-driven, consumer-oriented *Gesellschaft* society, with all of its attendant negative aspects. "Thus this crucial activity of spending one's best energies . . . in doing things remote from the immediate concerns of living eventuates apparently in the ability to buy somewhat more than formerly, but both business men and working men seem to be running for dear life in this business of making the money they earn [to] keep pace with the even more rapid growth of their subjective wants."¹⁰

As Richard Jensen characterized it, "Middletown was thus a morality tale. The authors were not poking fun at simple people, they were condemning a civilization. More calmly, they were exposing the contradictions of modernization." Although the Lynds believed that both classes bore the burden of a growing money economy, the working class shouldered a heavier weight. It was more subject to early risings and night work, layoffs, firings, variability of income, rising prices, decreased satisfaction in the workplace, fragility of its

organizations, and even decentralization of its dwellings, which tended to destroy community. Thus, the Lynds claimed that "The working class is mystified by the whole fateful business." Furthermore, the Lynds criticized the system that allowed gnawing insecurity and unpredictable unemployment to wipe out families' savings and hopes. The business class also felt the shift to a mass society; they experienced parental bewilderment over raising their children, saw all manner of taboos falling, and observed that the "school, like the factory, is a thoroughly regimented world." Both classes felt confusion over the role of the modern citizen. Some said "The first duty of a citizen is to produce." Others believed that "The American citizen's first importance to his country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer. Consumption is a new necessity." The Lynds drew a picture of the subversion of individual and primary group control and reference, because "Middletown people are tending increasingly to delegate their interests, while they busy themselves with more pressing and immediate concerns." A rising standard of living was obviously good, but it easily became a double-edged sword when it generated a pervasive lack of contentment and spurious excitement and hype through new selling and marketing techniques. "It is perhaps impossible to overestimate the role of motion pictures, advertising, and other forms of publicity . . . aiming to make the reader emotionally uneasy, to bludgeon him with the fact that decent people don't live the way *he* does."¹¹

The centerpiece of the consumer revolution was the automobile, and the Lynds took a mostly dark view of its impact on the community. The cost of cars forced some workers to mortgage their houses and it inevitably strained their household budgets. The traditional habit of saving seemed to be threatened too. Furthermore, the automobile contributed to moral looseness and tended to disrupt even Sunday morning religious habits. "Neighboring" decreased and attendance at meetings of all kinds would suffer because of the pull of the "open road." As far as the Lynds were concerned, "these space-binding leisure-time inventions imported from without--automobile, motion picture, and radio" and even

syndicated newspapers, were "reshaping the city," and functioned "as yet another means of standardizing many of Middletown's habits." In general, "opportunities to touch elbows with people are multiplied in the mobile and organized group life of today, but these contacts appear to be more casual and to leave the individual somewhat more isolated from the close friends of earlier years." Even worse, the Lynds believed that "the type of leisure-time organization which dominates today tends in the main to erect barriers to keep others out."¹²

The validity and legitimacy of urban society was not in question to the Lynds; their preoccupation lay with the effects of the assault of mass society on the shape and direction of the whole American culture and its communities. Neighborhoods, those basic units of social organization for both rural and urban American society for hundreds of years, seemed threatened with extinction: "granted that one should love one's neighbor as oneself, who *is* one's neighbor in this city of 38,000 in which neighborhoods are disappearing?" It bothered the Lynds that so many activities contributing to civic loyalty, group cohesion, and community solidarity were becoming more impersonal, mechanical, and devoid of humane motivations and high ideals. For example, "Like art and music, religious observances appear to be a less spontaneous and pervasive part of the life of the city today, while at the same time this condition is being met by more organized, directed effort [sic] to foster and diffuse these values." The lack of face-to-face interaction showed up in charitable activities as well: "Middletown reduces 'Christian Charity' increasingly to a secularized business proposition." But members of any community could function only with a certain amount of cohesion and feeling of togetherness. In Middletown, one class seemed to adjust to the momentous changes of the modernization process better than the other. "The sense of 'belonging,' . . . -- none the less real psychologically though possibly based on nothing more substantial than symbols--appears to be growing more rapidly among the business class than among the workers." The upper class bent, but did not break under the strains of social change; it did the "civic' thing easily, because civic values are its values at so many points." The workers

tended to react negatively, lethargically, and largely opted out of the adjustment process. They constituted something of a "missing voice" in the construction of their community-- "the major drives of 'Magic Middletown' are not so completely their drives, and only at second hand do they tingle to the exhilaration of some of the things that are living itself to the business group." The gulf appeared to widen between the two classes in Middletown, as communities large and small found themselves confronted with jarring changes attendant on the shift to a mass society. Yet, most of Middletown's citizens still believed in progress, despite being "more prone to cling to cherished traditions." A fundamental ambivalence concerning social change remained at the core of American culture and its communities.¹³

Middletown in Transition (1937), the Lynd's restudy of Muncie through the years of the Depression, used the same anthropological format as the first book, but concentrated more explicitly on social conflict, power relations, the value set of Middle America, and the impact of Muncie's larger population (47,000 in 1935) on community relations. The Lynds observed that the place had "grown up," and that it had all the accoutrements of a full-fledged small city. They admitted a lack of knowledge of what happened when a city grew into a larger urban classification, but offered some hypotheses. People tended to lose sight of each other more, both literally and figuratively. "Acquaintance and association become more selective." Informal associations were replaced by more formal organizational contacts. They noted a diminution of a sense of "belonging," leading to a "lower average participation in local movements of various kinds." "Progressively as one comes down the social scale, the chance of becoming a lost individual . . . increases." "Residential areas tend to become more segregated and homogeneous." Identification in a group tends to be based on "shorthand symbols," such as what one does or what one owns. Growing numbers of socially unconnected people forced "the ideologies and symbols that move the community to be generated at the top and to be imposed on those below, rather than rising spontaneously from the soil of community life."¹⁴

As a result of their studies, the Lynds became increasingly concerned about the stability and utility of neighborhoods and communities with regard to their critical role in the maintenance of American democracy. If people lacked a feeling of rootedness in their locales, they would have little stake in the problems and the future of either the local or national society. They reduced part of the problem to the increase in size and scope of urban places. "One of the major problems of urban living . . . is this weakening of personal identification with neighborhood and community ties. At the extreme, . . ., one tends to witness a society built of individual bricks largely unbound together by the binding mortar of common community purposes. People are apt to pride themselves on the fact that they have freed themselves from the localisms involved in loyalty to Rotary, to church and Ladies' Aid, to civic drives, and to neighborhood that they regard as characterizing the 'small town Babbitt.' In so far as this 'freedom' reduces the individual to a social atom related to his fellows chiefly by their common pursuit of private gain under the impersonal price system, there is ample basis for questioning whether the freedom may not represent an acute social pathology rather than a gain." The business class had accepted the ethic of modernization in order to deal with the contradictions caused by the development of a mass society. But it was this very creed which the Lynds stridently identified as the real culprit in the evolution of an unbalanced modern American culture. In the way modernization was applied by the new mass society, it produced a greater sophistication and facility in the use of new technology, the efficient handling of goods and services, and the production and management of larger amounts of information, but it also hampered the development of the fully functioning community, by subverting the desirable aspects of small-town life and exacerbating the negative parts of the urban experience. The processes of industrialization and urbanization had irretrievably melded and generated a unique type of society with a new problematic.¹⁵

Building on the Lynd's "pioneering" success, other sociologists swiftly turned their attention to community studies of all kinds. One such study by Albert Blumenthal, a

University of Chicago alumnus, focused on a Rocky Mountain small town. Small-Town Stuff (1932), adopted more of a social-psychological approach and less of an anthropological orientation than did Middletown, but the similarities were striking. The book's editor acknowledged that its purpose was that of "obtaining a picture of the small-town community as a whole and as revealed by penetration into the inner lives of its members. . . . Not unlike the anthropological studies of the present day, this is, then, a study of a disappearing or at least a changing culture." Furthermore, it utilized the participant observer method unreservedly. Obviously, the major difference lay in the object of study; "Mineville" was a rural small-town of 1,400 people, whereas Muncie was a sizeable small city. Despite this dissimilarity, both the Lynds and Blumenthal claimed for their respective communities a representativeness which they believed spoke to both rural and urban situations. Blumenthal disputed any "cause for assuming that the town as a whole lags seriously behind the general march of progress. Although Minevillers do not have elevators, skyscrapers, streetcars, art museums, grand opera, or gang warfare, their lives do not seem to differ essentially from those of city residents of their economic stations." Furthermore, Mineville was used simply as an illustration; according to Blumenthal, its story was really the story of all small towns in America. He noted that although small towns varied widely over a number of criteria, they shared "traits common to all of them which have been recognized from time immemorial and which are referred to in common parlance by the term 'small-town stuff.'"¹⁶

"Small-town stuff" consisted of close acquaintanceship, the dominance of personal relationships, constant observation and evaluation by the community, and a feeling of belongingness. The main problem of small-town life centered around excessive conformism and repression of individual variation. But Blumenthal saw accelerated social change as good for the small community if it expanded cultural horizons and brought desirable outside influences to even the most isolated places. "Historically, the small town's unfortunate reputation was justified, but with the annihilation of space by modern inventions the

situation is changing. Not only are the people of Mineville constantly reaching toward the outside world for new things, but the outside world exercises an avowed pressure to force changes to occur in the little town." To some extent, the spirit of mass society had entered the small town, if not the actual physical presence and structure.¹⁷

Blumenthal identified four different attitudes toward the community, which seemed to be independent of social change caused by external forces. He labeled a small group "very enthusiastic," who usually were the community "boosters" and businesspeople. Their lives were often completely absorbed in community developments and never said a negative thing about the town. The supportive citizens, but not part of the "boosters," received the label "satisfied." Of this second group, many had spent some time in the city, and they preferred small-town life. Strong attachments to the town generally developed over extended periods of time. "Every hillside, creek, mine, street, alley, or building of consequence is rich in associations for these old persons, as are most of the several thousand graves in the cemetery." The "resigned" occupied a third group; they "accept Mineville as they do the inevitable forces of nature." Many were bound to the town by property, age, skills, or lack of gumption. The final category Blumenthal labeled "the dissatisfied." He conceived of them as the majority, but it is difficult to believe that a town could function on any meaningful level with such a high level of dissatisfaction. People often criticized the "ignorance" and "narrowness" of "poor old Mineville," a "forlorn" town. But the lack of privacy, next to the unpredictable weather and the high cost of living, was the main complaint. Of those who were dissatisfied and left Mineville, 75 percent settled in other small towns. This fact suggested that despite their fault-finding with Mineville, the object of their criticism was not particularly small-town stuff.¹⁸

Some people liked taking part in small-town life, but did not have personalities suited to wage work, by which most of the people of Mineville gained a living. "When you can see yourself getting ahead like you can on the farm, life seems worthwhile, but when you work

for wages you spend all you make and the only progress you feel is that you are getting older." Yet wage earners were not looked down on, perhaps because most people were employed in the mines, and without their labor no one benefited. During winters, the mines usually closed down. Nevertheless, even in the winter of 1932, relief was handled entirely inside the community. In Mineville, at least, the wealthy and the working class often lived side by side in mixed neighborhoods. Workers were careful not to earn the enmity of their employers; yet, employers tended to look after the needs of their employees.¹⁹

The great strength and attraction of small towns historically has been their warmth and intimacy, and Mineville was no exception. The usual stability of small places allows people time to develop deep attachments to other people and things, and "the small town not only encourages but enforces such long-continued identification. In spite of themselves, Minevillers find themselves developing and holding fond sentiments for the little town they are so prone to abuse." Small communities become something like extended families, and the town takes on part of the identity of individual members. "The vast and fast-changing environment of a city does not readily foster such intimacy of response, and even another small town does not offer the seasoned Mineviller an adequate substitute. He has grown to demand an intimate community and a particular one--Mineville." Blumenthal confirmed that small places acted to take the sting out of social isolation, by making it easier to get involved in the life of the community and just by being in close physical proximity on a daily basis.²⁰

Gossip occupied a prime position in the social life of most little towns. Blumenthal claimed that ruralites had a greater interest in scandal than urbanites, because the "news" was more important since the people affected were more meaningful and significant to small towners. The stake in the common, shared experience of community proved too strong to ignore. It was a powerful social dynamic and a potentially dangerous one too, because it could destroy privacy and reputations through a network of "news" spreaders. People had to have a healthy skepticism to counter the flurry of rumors and half-truths. Typically, people

poked fun at the inevitable gossip and complained loudly against its practice. Yet, verbalizing what they thought about each other was part of the process of constructing a community reality. For example, the most important shared value was "making good." This was determined by a kind of averaging process involving the following attributes: "acquisition of this world's goods; attainment of positions of dominance in the mining industry; mastery of a profession; success as a parent; and success as a housekeeper."²¹

But these characteristics did not appear to be too much different from the centrality of materialism in the lives of Middletowners or other urbanites of much larger metropolises. Also like Middletown, Minevillers spent a great deal of time and energy in their large number of organizations ranging from the expected Rotary to the usual lodges to a "Deep Thinkers Club," which Blumenthal boasted "would surprise condescending critics of 'Main Street.'" Minevillers thought of themselves as somewhat physically separated from the outside world despite rail and highway connections, but they refused to admit to cultural isolation. Residents occupied themselves with much reading material, attendance of movies and school functions, and spirited discussions of important issues of the day. In fact, "in its day Main Street was widely read but aroused no unusual criticism. Apparently Minevillers had the common sense to know that Sinclair Lewis did not pretend to be drawing a picture of a typical small town. For, despite many similarities between Mineville and Lewis' Gopher Prairie, the differences were so great that Minevillers" tended to read emphasis into the particular characters instead of the specific place--as a small town. In general, Blumenthal found that the small community not unexpectedly approached social change with a certain reluctance. But civic improvement eventually prodded most people to take part in basic changes, usually instigated by the economic elite. The mines, too, regularly instituted change seeking greater profitability. Blumenthal proposed that even gossip helped bring about progressive action, despite hesitance and diffidence to broach issues in the open. Contrary to the accepted image of the small town, most social changes were unopposed!²²

Blumenthal continued his attack on Babbitt and Main Street images of the small town and the supposed superiority of urban places by arguing that urbanites were also susceptible to fear of change and shallowness of vision. "We [do not] have conclusive evidence as to the progressiveness of cities as a whole relative to small towns as a whole. Blinded by evidences of large-scale progress in their midst, urbanites lose sight of the equally large-scale conservatism which their cities harbor, and proceed to think of conservatism as a trait relatively peculiar to the small town." Small towns no longer had to be provincial outposts of pioneer crudities; modern technology and progressive sensibilities combined to provide hope for attainment of new cultural horizons for all rural dwellers. "It is the amount of live issues arising which determines the extent of thinking done--there being plenty of these in the small town of Mineville, particularly since the community . . . is not limited to the square mile of the city limits but really reaches to the four corners of the earth." Blumenthal took an optimistic and decidedly futurist approach by attempting to predict the convergence of both internal and external forces for change in Mineville. "The United States is becoming one great community in which, with little delay, an obscure western village buried high in the Rocky Mountains may partake of the fruits of the whole nation and of the world."²³

Yet, the foundation of small-town life was that permanent core of stability and intimacy which inhered in the structure and size of the place; *this would likely not change in the future.* "There is no reason for supposing that 'small-town stuff' will not be very much the same as it is today aside from the changes occasioned by further and further participation . . . in the larger world by such means as . . . airplanes, television, and other products of man's inventive genius." Surprisingly, Blumenthal made these positive statements in the early depths of the Great Depression. More common was the attitude expressed in Whiting Williams' review of *Small-Town Stuff*: "In these trying days, help is needed, God knows, by every citizen, if some of those problems of Mineville and Middletown--and every other American town and city--are to be solved by a democratic form of government." Not as

sanguine about the speed of change as Blumenthal, Williams hoped "that these unceasing waves of change may contrive somehow to build together for good." Echoing Lynd's concern about the increasing irrelevancy of much of social science research, Williams cried out "But Mineville is too much the cross section of both large city and small town America in 1931 to justify handling as though it were a stone from the Silurian epoch, of interest only to a few bespectacled, highbrow sociologists."²⁴

Whereas Mineville had settled into a relatively stable balance between local and translocal forces in the early thirties, other even more isolated small communities were just beginning to experience the disturbances associated with the impact of mass society. The question of how a largely isolated farming community of less than 1,000 people in the southern Midwest reacted to the infiltration of modern life intrigued anthropologist Carl Withers. Writing under the pseudonym James West, Withers did his field research in the years 1939-1941. The results, published as Plainville, U. S. A. (1945), represented a continuation of the social anthropological tradition begun by the Lynds of studying the basic categories of everyday human existence and analyzing what might be called the response to modernization. Unlike Mineville which adjusted to change well enough and actually entertained progressive ideas with a certain tolerance, West found a stereotypically small, "backward," provincial, superstitious, tradition-bound community which actively resisted change of all kinds. Like Mineville, and to a lesser extent Middletown, Plainville could be profitably understood by an evaluation of its "local culture." "For all these small towns a long local history is remembered, and each, in its landscape, is felt by Woodland County people to have a unique color and 'personality.'" As a center for its rural trade area and the "focus of community loyalty," Plainvillers reserved their greatest sentiments and identity for their local community, and to a close extent, their county. "Wherever they go, they 'came from Plainville.'" They were Plainvillers first, last, and always, and identification with larger regions or the nation as a whole only occurred spasmodically, usually during wartime.²⁵

In Plainville, West found a community that had achieved an equilibrium between the locale and the larger territory, but with the balance tilted markedly in the direction of the former. This resulted in a place where people talked as if land had the only real value and everyone sought "independence," knowing full well that few could become rich on Plainville's generally poor to average soil. Despite obvious differences in wealth and status, the frontier ideal of equalitarianism remained strong and was even cherished. However, Plainville's society stratified along two axes: the "prairie" people and the "hill" people, with the former occupying the higher status. West noticed that while kinship ties had been weakened by migration, new machinery and transport means, and the rise of the money economy, an unexpectedly strong class system remained where even clans were still active into the forties. Serious community disagreements caused extended kin groups to stand together, and even mild issues brought out the basic class structure which informed the cultural instructions to the entire community. West noted: "The class system of Plainville might well be called a 'super-organization,' because it provides for every person living there a master pattern for arranging according to relative rank every other individual, and every family, clique, lodge, club, church and other organization and association in Plainville society Yet, many, if not most, Plainvillers completely deny the existence of class in the community." Thus, as subsequent observers of the Plainville study have observed, "knowledge and power were locked into a closed system. Plainville's network of informal power was sustained *both* by rigidly restrictive knowledge of everyone *and* by euphemistic proclamations of equality. Almost from the first, the Plainville citizen gained a catalog of information about everyone in town with special pigeonholes for every person."²⁶

If birth was the great class organizer in Plainville, then socialization and an individual's behavior thereafter determined the level to which he or she could climb. People attached little importance to education outside of the home. Consequently, formal education was underfunded, perfunctory, narrowly defined, and largely impotent to bring in outside ideas

and techniques. As in Mineville, people in Plainville belonged to a plethora of groups and organizations, formal and informal, with a tremendous overlapping of membership. Many of these groups vied for the cultural leadership of the town, and the direction it would take in the future. But while Mineville's organizational structure tended to promote a version of Western populism, Plainville was hounded, in West's opinion, by fundamentalist religious and moral strictures. For example, the "old widow's group" perpetuated ideas about how "decent" folk should behave. They condemned modern fashions, drinking, dancing, and card playing. "The religious control of morals operates mainly through gossip and the fear of gossip. People report, suspect, laugh at, and condemn the peccadilloes of others, and walk and behave carefully to avoid being caught in any trifling missteps of their own." Plainvillers also maintained a traditionalist stance toward change in other areas of their society such as agriculture, the economy, and the built environment. Many people refused to accept "scientific" farming methods, continued a semi-subsistence lifestyle, entered the money economy in only a marginal way, and adopted modern conveniences, especially in the home, very slowly. Despite the superstitious, parochial, suspicious, and outright backward cast of mind manifested by Plainvillers, West pointed to the key redeeming aspect of their collective life--the strength and stability of community, albeit a male-dominated one. "It begins in boyhood play and continues in the line-fence neighboring, loafing-group intimacy and trading and 'political' maneuverings in which all men move freely about the community. The social integration of the community rests on the easy intimacy of men. The community *is* a community because men can associate freely beyond the walls of their homes."²⁷

By 1940, the stable, integrated community of the 1914 era, with both prairie and hill farms based on similar underlying social, economic, and technological systems, had begun to change, not only in response to new modes of communication and transportation like the automobile, radio, telephone, and rural free delivery, but because of the "government men" of the AAA, WPA and more effective county agents. The debilitating impact of the

Depression had brought them to Plainville, and a small group of "reformers" helped spread the doctrines of "book farming," a need for a larger money economy, the delights of diversity and quality in new consumer goods, and the attractiveness of increased personal freedom. Attendant to these changes was a cultural complex created in part by cars, individualism, media-generated new desires, and openness to "liberating" ideas from the outside world. "Though many Plainville citizens would gladly 'go back to the old days,' there is no way to go back, because Plainville is no longer isolated." Having taken over the leadership of the older merchant group, the young reformers wished to change the area quickly, because they "trust[ed] the experts." But they were up against continuous resistance, which even took the form of making Plainville children uncompetitive in the outside world. "The hostility to 'new ideas' and to 'higher education' and the stressing in churches of the 'sins of cities' are devices by which, whatever their other functions, parents strive to keep their children in Plainville, and effectually restrict their success when they leave." Yet, it was obvious to West that Plainville and other "traditional" communities were "doomed" as he put it. "As their ancient value systems crumble under the blows of a new 'tradition' imposed from outside, their problem is to learn to participate more fully in the cultural rewards of the greater society." But money alone would not solve the problems of poor communities like Plainville. "[Its] children who must migrate need training for entry into urban life. Those who will inherit the community and spend their lives there need 'education' and the fruits of education as greatly as those who leave."²⁸

Like the Lynds and Blumenthal, West concluded that modern mass society was here to stay, that small rural communities would have to adjust to many of the new realities, and that they would need help to do accomplish those changes. Nevertheless, he refused to concede the natural superiority of such transformative conditions, especially as found in urban agglomerations. "The 'decent' urban knowledge upon which our industrial and 'money-conscious' civilization depends is beyond the reach of the majority who are born and die in

cities. Plainvillers have virtually no contact with it. Since there are millions of 'Plainvillers' in America, the problem of Plainville is the problem of America." That is, America faced the challenge of how to best assimilate small communities into the larger society without destroying the inherent attributes of such places. Few Americans in the forties and fifties understood the magnitude of such an undertaking or the dangers incumbent on those small places.²⁹

Study after study began to place rural communities outside of, or in the process of falling behind, the mainstream of American society. This development raised questions about the continued stability of small towns and their hinterlands. In 1939, the United States Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Agricultural Economics undertook simultaneous studies of six widely separated communities, both geographically and culturally. "The communities were selected as samples of, or points on, a continuum from high community stability to great instability." They ranged from an Old Order Amish community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to a hard-hit Dust Bowl community in Kansas. The middle of the continuum was represented by the Corn Belt community of Irwin, Iowa.³⁰

From the start, the Irwin way of life was synonymous with farming. Demographic stability characterized the town of Irwin (345 people in 1940) and the rural community it served as a trade center (total population: 1,000). Blessed with uniformly good soil, Irwinites achieved an early and sustained prosperity based on the marketing of hogs, cattle, corn, and small grains. But the agricultural recession of the 1920s settled heavily on Irwin farmers, forcing many who had bought land at inflated prices into tenancy. The 1930s witnessed the end of the period of expansion and speculation. Farmers willingly sought out government farm programs, which partially enabled them to withstand the severe droughts of 1934 and 1936. Yields later rose higher than ever before as agriculturalists rapidly adopted hybrid seeds. The ordeal of twenty years of economic travail changed farmers' attitude toward debt—they had come to fear it. "I believe if I go back to grandfather's way, if I put my faith in

land cleared of debt, in houses, barns, full granaries, full stockyards--things that I can call my own--that I, too, can have money in the bank. Of course, I want many things that Grandfather didn't have, but I want to think of things somewhat as he did.'" The study's authors, rural sociologists Edward Moe and Carl Taylor, found an intense desire for security among all Irwinites, especially the younger farmers. Despite the previous hard times, most young people wanted to stay on the land. The peoples' basic philosophy remained intact: in the long run, success could be taken for grant; the proper amount of work mixed with the good soils would automatically bring prosperity, if outside forces would stop interfering. Progress and independence on the land would then be assured.³¹

The Irwin community experienced successive waves of change often led by technological innovations. However, these never seemed to threaten the cohesiveness of the community. In fact, mechanization of farming had been adopted rapidly and without hesitation. As fast as they could be afforded, farmers bought new machines and powered equipment to lighten the always heavy load of manual work. Moe and Taylor observed no major class divisions in Irwin community, except for the usual suspicions between town and country. Resentment built during the Depression over the lack of a program for town dwellers corresponding to government farm payments. But the technology of the car and powered agriculture created more common interests and needs between town and country folk, thus diminishing any antipathies. Both farmers and townspeople welcomed the added geographical mobility; they were said to be more "on the go." Farmers became less dependent on the nearby village and more reliant on the immediate neighborhood, especially in the sharing of machinery and tools. Yet, less old-fashioned neighboring took place, while socializing with selected friends rose (made possible by the auto). Social occasions switched from the old-time picnics, work bees, and church socials to more pure recreation like dancing, movies, radio listening, and motoring. Farmers were even able to spend more time in town, and often needed to because of their greater participation in a cash economy.³²

With the rise in farm tenancy, observers questioned whether the family could retain independence on land with the attachment of ownership taken away. But even these people manifested an intense interest and sentiment in the old family homestead. Because the role of the home narrowed somewhat, people spoke of a growing desire for social functions like moral education and birth to remain there. In contrast to the attitude toward education in Plainville, Moe and Taylor noted that in Irwin "Localism does not seem to hamper the selection of teachers. . . . The value of the teachers as leaders is recognized and there seems to be little criticism of the schools or their management." Nevertheless, professionals such as teachers, ministers, and doctors received no special treatment or status. Even former owners who became tenant farmers carried no permanent shame or stigma. The community effectively transferred its blame for failure to the outside world. The old enemies of the Grange and Farmers' Alliance--railroads, middlemen, and Wall Street--became mass markets, international economic downturns, and high manufacturers' prices for machinery.³³

Unlike community studies done by the Lynds, Blumenthal, West, and most especially Warner, it was the lack of class consciousness which impressed Moe and Taylor the most. "It would be difficult to discern any clear-cut class structure in Irwin community. Neither the village nor the farm people feel superior to each other. Tenants and owners associate together in all kinds of activities. Women are almost as often leaders in community activities as men." More and more farmers took on leadership responsibilities due as much to a conjunction of "mutual concerns of the village and farm people and a better integration of their interests and activities" as anything else. Moe and Taylor heard few complaints about leadership and an amazing degree of satisfaction in living in Irwin community. They remarked: "The community in many ways is much more a community now than it was 50 years ago. The village has become the center of the activities of the farmers, and the differences between the villagers and farm dwellers have declined. . . . There is general recognition that the farm and nonfarm groups are dependent on each other." The authors

also reported on the tremendous pride expressed about Irwin being a good place and business center, especially for its small size. Was Irwin an incipient, classless, mid-century rural utopia? Moe and Taylor made no real attempt to deal with destructive gossip and other mechanisms of small-town restrictiveness. Their glowing report easily stated that "Irwin community is a loose, more-or-less informal area of association because it is the area of the greatest number of close contacts and because it is the location of their homes, schools, churches, and visiting rooms. It is thought of as a community--'their community.'"³⁴

Irwinites faced the 1940s with a generally optimistic attitude, tinged with remnants of Depression-induced pessimism. They overwhelmingly embraced technology, with halfway measures largely rejected. Power farming eased their physical load and gave them more time for community activities. Although the benefits were obvious, "All farmers recognize the tendency for power farming to do away with year-round labor on farms and to lead to the consolidation of farm units." However, they blamed the displacement of farm families on lack of operator efficiency. Irwinites even believed they could utilize the tools and techniques of the modern world and still retain their independence and their local equilibrium. "Stability, quiet, and serenity will come to us even in the fast moving world if we organize our living in terms of modern methods of transportation, communication, and business operations, including farming." City life appealed very little to Irwinites, but they eagerly appropriated its conveniences, gadgets, and the increasing stream of information ranging from Cosmopolitan to agricultural bulletins.³⁵

In the absence of particular ethnic, religious, or historical bonds, Irwin held itself together based on propinquity and common activities. "About 250 families whose patterns of visiting, institutional participation, and trading are both traditional and practicable." Farming integrated Irwin; agriculture dominated every aspect of its life. Common necessities and common practices attendant on a widely shared mode of farming, plus its inherent meteorological and biological cycles combined to provide the comprehensiveness necessary

for an integrated local community and culture. Furthermore, the homogeneity of soil quality throughout the community gave every farmer an equal opportunity to succeed and contributed to the creation of a broad, dominant class of farmer-entrepreneurs. New influences impinged on the collectivity, but were gradually processed on a community template constituted by common views and ideas. Ultimately modulated to suit the community, they did not disturb the basic coherence or isolate anyone. Thus, Moe and Taylor reported "The multiplying of new influences has meant a greater diversity of behavior on the part of individuals living here. But community consciousness and sanction of this diversity have expanded with its expanding universe, and individuals are not therefore frustrated by community taboos." Where West saw little but gloom and doom in the future of Plainville and other small places like it, Moe and Taylor painted a picture of a community not only holding its own, but striding forcefully and positively into the modern world, almost like a colossus, at least in its own backyard. "The people of Irwin community do not feel that they are living in a dual world--their community and the outside world--because the outside world comes to them, for the most part, through the very instruments they use to enhance life within the community. . . . it robs them of few if any of the basic local things by which and for which they work and live."³⁷

The people of Irwin and other Corn Belt communities built successful local cultures based on the natural fecundity of the soil. They learned from their mistakes in land speculation and debt in the 1920s and resisted the attitude of misplaced optimism. But there existed many communities to the west of the Corn Belt which did not adapt well to their surroundings. The second study in the USDA's Rural Life Studies series demonstrated the fact that almost the entire southern plains area was characterized by social and economic instability. Earl Bell's study of Sublette, Kansas, while more of an area study based on county data than a community study, provided ample and depressing evidence of a general failure to understand the ecology of the region. People did not understand how the wide

variations in rainfall patterns magnified the natural riskiness and unpredictability of agriculture. Unsound farming practices exacerbated the social and economic consequences of extremely variable harvests. The part played by farmers in creation of the Dust Bowl spoke directly to that point. In a scolding, scathing tone, the author laid the blame squarely on those who labored under deluded expectations about what farming and community should be on the Great Plains. "Many are discouraged and leave, in the belief that the country is unfit for agriculture and can be used successfully for range land. Those who remain call the period subnormal and speculate as to when the country will 'come back,' thus indicating their belief that the good years are normal. . . . Wishful thinking makes it easy to believe that something has permanently ended the hard times of the past. . . . None of these ideas of the county is correct." Dependence on the one-crop rural economy of wheat, plus the use of tillage practices suitable for humid climates would bring eventual ruin again, as had occurred previously with frightening regularity almost every twenty years. Bell stated that "The development of a stable life must await recognition that good years and bad years are both to be expected, that eventually bad years are sure to follow good ones. When that is recognized, the basis for a stable agriculture and social life may be developed."³⁷

Many problems, some with long histories, had to be faced and overcome in order for stable communities to thrive. High population mobility and turnover retarded the creation of a permanent social organization. Part of this turnover stemmed from undersized land holdings--a quarter section was insufficient during the bad years to make a living. Optimism generated during periods of good harvests prompted people to build public institutions on an inappropriate scale, thus contributing to tax burdens too high over the long run. The lingering ideas about the "Golden Years" of the 1920s on the Great Plains continued to mislead people into overly optimistic forecasts of plenty. The growth in the use of machinery built a spirit of individual independence which did not play well for the cooperative spirit necessary for a healthy community. Furthermore, with the native pastures

destroyed, farmers found it hard to go back to stock raising. Old customs of self-sufficiency in food, for example, went by the wayside. Even the idea of hard work became an ambiguous concept, as people remembered when they worked hard and earned little and when they worked little and earned much. "Thus their old values of ownership, thrift, hard work, good agricultural practices, conservatism, good fellowship, and cooperation have been weakened." Bell posited two broad principles for maintaining a community based on agriculture in an area which "fluctuates so violently in its productivity:" first, appropriate dry land farming practices would stabilize production and regenerate pastures to allow diversified production utilizing cattle mainly; and second, communities needed to change their values and beliefs to support ecologically-sound farming practices. Bell concluded that "The Great Plains are not an Eden, but neither are they an impossible land in which to develop a stable society of people with a decent level of living."³⁸

Next above the dysfunctional Sublette, Kansas, on the stable/unstable community continuum enunciated in the USDA's Rural Life Studies was the community of Landaff, New Hampshire. Kenneth MacLeish and Kimball Young studied a mainly agricultural, hill community with no well-developed trade center, but with a long history dating back to the early 1800s. Located in northern New Hampshire, Landaff exhibited strong typical Yankee values such as proud individualism and self-reliance, traditional localism, and the type of independence as stated by New Hampshire's state motto, "Live Free or Die." The economy historically was characterized by small farms and lumbering. By 1940, however, the area faced high out-migration, a circumscribed economy, a decline in the usual institutions, and a rather dim future. Never exhibiting more than average stability, recently the area was heavily influenced by the outside economy. Most farmers could not or would not make the transition to the large dairy operations necessary to remain competitive. Since Landaff community cohesiveness never centered on a town or village center, its integrative function was based on shared values like hard work, honesty, thrift, ambition, moderate materialism,

and the ability to mind one's own business. Limited by its material resources, lack of institutional integration, and its ability to prepare its young for adaptation to other locales, Landaff expected to see increasing numbers of abandoned farms and increasing numbers of tourists and part-time residents. MacLeish and Young exhibited little sentimentalism in this evaluation: "Only from the romantic viewpoint can the disintegration of the hill towns be thought to be tragic." Yet they thought there would always be a community, even if it only consisted of summer visitors.³⁹

Out-migration also posed a problem for the southern community of Harmony, Georgia, another subject of the Rural Life Studies. Rural sociologist Waller Wynne studied the former cotton village of Harmony, which was really two separate communities, one white, one black, but with residences of both races interspersed. In the 1920s, cotton cultivation collapsed under the assault of the boll weevil. Those with capital shifted to dairying or migrated; those with little capital or acreage, mainly tenants, remained tied to the land, poor cotton yields, and near subsistence living conditions. Of the two communities, the white community was the harder hit, being smaller to begin with and experiencing a higher percentage of migrating youth. Both white and black communities regained some semblance of stability by the early 1940s, but the dearth of young people undercut the functioning of traditional centers of integration like churches and the white school, which was closed for a time due to a lack of pupils. The black community was generally more stable owing to less mobility and a greater percentage of young people remaining to support its institutions. "The Harmony Community feels the loss of its youth; the farmers believed that the decline in community feeling comes from that as much as from any other factor. The lack of future farmers portends a further disintegration of the institutional life of the community." As was common to communities with dispersed residential patterns or places with no or small trade centers, the introduction of the auto further destabilized the community, having failed to draw people together. Like the examples of Landaff and Sublette, Harmony demonstrated

the need of all small communities for a critical core of permanent residents who could somehow reproduce themselves and create conditions of relative stability to effect the successful intergenerational transfer of community control and vitality.⁴⁰

Like Landaff and Harmony, El Cerrito, New Mexico, suffered through the loss of most of its economic base. Unlike the former, El Cerrito maintained a stable, integrated community; it functioned as a "single unit" in a number of social aspects. As a highly traditional Hispanic pastoral community set in semi-arid plateau land and economically based on sheep grazing, it existed as an almost autonomous village. However, much of the original grazing land was sold, homesteaded, or leased out. Many of El Cerrito's residents switched to making their living from outside jobs and small irrigated subsistence patches of valley-floor land. With the occasional loss of outside jobs families face real privation; the loss of cash income posed the largest threat to continued strong community life. Federal relief programs helped to maintain the community financially, but tended to break down old ways of life by intruding on customs especially of the older people and physically removed many young people to NYA and CCC camps where they were introduced to vastly different cultural influences. The growing number of inducements to leave the community included jobs, higher incomes, new modes of recreation, better housing, and attractive cultural opportunities. These threatened the dominance of the extended family, the traditional role of the Catholic church, village identity, and the strong sense of belonging produced by ease of interaction and comfort of a place where every single person was important to the community group. The authors of the El Cerrito study, Olen Leonard and Charles Loomis, touched on the somewhat elusive quality of "being at home," when they noted of residents of rural villages "are especially aware of an expected loyalty to their village. . . . They are at ease only among their own people, who understand them and with whom they can converse in their own language." Despite the close feelings of social solidarity, the community continued to be threatened by economic distress in the form of out-migration in search of

jobs and income. By 1960, three-quarters of El Cerrito's twenty-six families had moved away, mostly to Pueblo, Colorado, over 260 miles distant.⁴¹

In the same year as he collaborated in the research for the El Cerrito study (1939), Charles P. Loomis of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics delivered a paper to the American Sociological Society entitled "Rebuilding American Community Life." In this presentation he distilled a lifetime of community study and a decade of governmental experience in the establishment of intentional communities. The subsistence homesteads program and related community-building efforts then all housed in the Farm Security Administration demonstrated that while physical structures like houses could be built by social scientists and contractors, genuine, integrated communities only evolved over time and developed as a result of the residents themselves making houses into homes and acquaintances into cooperating neighbors united in loyalty to their community. "Some sociologists are anxious to be called social engineers, [but] the fact that communities cannot be built need not mean resignation to the status quo. Social processes and change can be nurtured." Loomis quite candidly confessed to the many errors made by rural housing reform agencies and mistakes made by his colleagues who had worked for or consulted with those same federal organizations. For example, "on some of the stranded urban workers' projects, people who had not the slightest knowledge of how to operate even a simple cooperatively-owned store became part of huge cooperative schemes involving factories. Few realistic students of cooperation were surprised when such endeavors failed." In addition, Loomis lashed out at excessive outside direction of local communities: "Experience with control through a centralized agency in Washington has demonstrated . . . if centralized administration did increase efficiency in management and operation, it lost in local support and morale." Loomis advocated the creation of a network of national planning committees with its base in community planning committees. These would be connected to county committees, which in turn would send representatives to sit on state committees and so on up

to the national level. Information, advice, sentiments, and plans would be forwarded from the local level up through the administrative chain. Not part of a true hierarchy, the local level would ideally retain substantial initiative and responsibility for its community. Loomis claimed that "If such groups are made more vocal through their opportunity to have a say in planning agricultural programs, community organization in rural American will be vitally affected." Comparing his ideal to a similar traditional Russian social structure, Loomis said "We do not want Russian mirs, but a more integrated community would improve rural life."⁴²

Not all scholars on rural affairs were that outspoken regarding community activism, but many (especially rural sociologists) were very concerned about the fate of the small community in a world of mass changes and the impact its decline would have on the practice of American democracy. In The Changing Community (1938), rural sociologist Carle Zimmerman claimed that the disintegration of the small community was caused by its inability to deal with the burden of substantial new social demands, which not well met to the satisfaction of the middle class, devolved to the control of larger organizations such as the national and state governments. He then made the common leap to the assumption that American democracy was in jeopardy as well: "It seems clear that America[n] . . . local self-government is disappearing." Functions once removed from the small community, would be difficult to reintegrate. The centralization of authority caused local people to "lose interest in community affairs and become immersed primarily in private doings. Local government tends to become a matter of petitions which are directed only at the more obvious (objective) 'injustices.' The intangible things in government cannot be clarified by petition since the bureaucrats generally do not know the local situation. Government passes more and more from subjectivity to objectivity, and from the hands of the thoughtful people to the petitioners." Zimmerman concluded his book in language replete with the distasteful symbolism of class conflict, state tyranny, and authoritarianism. "Centralization emphasizes

nominalism, formalism and individualism in the local community. In so far as community realism is essential to the kind of life a people desire, centralization stifles its maintenance or development. Community realism is personal. National realism is impersonal and emphasizes the class struggle." Under the state of affairs where local community control has been centralized, "To change the course of events, a violent movement, practically a revolution, is required." Zimmerman, of course, was not a flaming revolutionary, but the strength of his conviction toward the small community was very evident.⁴³

After World War II, leading rural sociologists continued to view the small community on the one hand much as in Galpin's day, "composed of a village center and the farmers living in its trade hinterland . . . that show a tendency to persist;" but on the other hand they acknowledged that a "great change" was taking place, which Lowry Nelson judiciously labeled "secularization." The small community was caught up in an "evolution toward a complex, sophisticated, and secondary-group society, away from the simple folk society characterized by a high degree of informal and intimate personal relations." Nevertheless, he did not expect that either urban or rural worlds would lose their "distinguishing features" as a result of the accelerating assimilation of the setting of the small community by the growing mass society. Nelson, like many others with sympathies for the rural environment, held out the hope that "Rural people and rural living will take on many of the characteristics of urban people and urban living, but the two ways of life will still be inevitably different," based on a "reciprocal relation between city and country" which had always existed.⁴⁴

It was that reciprocal relationship which concerned some critics of the direction of rural sociological research, because it attributed continuing influence and importance to the rural community, much of which, in their estimation, did not exist. In an article entitled "The Search for the Rural Community" (1946), BAE staffers Walter Kollmorgen and Robert Harrison assailed the failure to achieve any standard definition of the rural community, the sometimes open advocacy of programs to revive it, and the pointless delineation of

communities, especially when some involved in this mode of study "reach a state of frustration and bewilderment in their search." Furthermore, they accused rural scholars of being self-serving, biased, and unrealistic: "Rural community studies reflect the authors' preconceptions of what rural association should be rather than picturing the actual working arrangements of the everyday world." Instead of continually reporting on claims in finding and observing the cumulative (organic) rural community everywhere in America, more attention should be paid to data indicating its disappearance. Kollmorgen and Harrison chided such rural sociologists as Carle Zimmerman, Carl Taylor, Lowry Nelson, and others for not heeding their own findings; that is, "the growing replacement of them [rural communities] by the special functional groupings or 'interest groups.'" Instead of wading around in atavistic "folk residues," "romanticized reflections," and bygone good-old days, "rural sociologists should begin to bare the mysteries of human association in the secular world." Kollmorgen and Harrison emphasized over and over that the main theme of modern mass society was an "overdeveloped individualism," which though it caused new problems, needed to be studied and dealt with. The bureaucratization, commercialization, and secularization of American life had overtaken the "sacred" rural community; rural sociologists did themselves, the profession, and the nation a disservice by continued fixation on a fruitless quest for the largely mythical rural community.⁴⁵

Not all rural sociologists could abide by the "realist" position taken by Kollmorgen and Harrison, nor did they side with the older, more romantic tradition of seeing the rural community as superior on every front to urban places. Walter Goldschmidt conducted the now classic study *As You Sow* (1947) to evaluate the corporate control of farming and its effects on rural communities. He concluded that "From industrialized sowing of the soil is reaped an urbanized rural society." Goldschmidt was no raving agricultural Luddite or antimodernist primitive; he believed it was possible "to salvage the good from tradition and still capture the best that technological efficiency has to offer." The most famous part of his

study centered on the two rural communities of Arvin and Dinuba in California. Both places had similar populations, volume of farm production, climates, techniques of production, and locations relative to larger towns. The only major difference was in the size of farming operations--Arvin was characterized by large corporate farms and Dinuba was populated by many small, family farms. The study demonstrated a dramatic difference in the type of community produced by the opposite ownership patterns. The small farm pattern supported a much larger, more vibrant, stable, and prosperous community than did the large farm area. Dinuba sustained twice as many businesses, a larger retail volume, larger expenditures for capital goods, a higher standard of living, much better public facilities including schools and parks, more cultural institutions, and much better access to the mechanisms of political decision making. Goldschmidt concluded that "quality of social conditions is associated with scale of operations; that farm size is in fact an important causal factor in the creation of such differences and that it is reasonable to believe that farm size is the most important cause of these differences." Furthermore, Goldschmidt believed his findings held for any region of the country experiencing industrialization of agriculture. The case studies of Arvin and Dinuba did not seem to speak to myth but to hard-headed political decisions made by the agricultural elite and the social consequences of agribusiness.⁴⁶

Whether the rural community had receded into the mythic past, or was as vibrant and worthy of study as ever, was still a debatable issue, even after World War II. But by then, the field had split into two distinct, nearly mutually exclusive approaches to the study of the small community. Rural sociologists dominated the rural perspective on community, continuing to view it from a traditional, organic standpoint. The other perspective centered on an urban outlook and was populated by urban sociologists, urban planners, and indeed, the majority of most social scientific disciplines. They continued to study communities, but the number of the older type of neighborhood study decreased until the 1960s, while urban core and suburban studies increased markedly. The notion of a middle-ground or hybrid type

of community integrating the best aspects of both urban and rural places such as had been promulgated by Mumford, Morgan, and Garden City advocates disappeared almost completely in the period 1945 to 1960. While not an exception to this rule, W. Lloyd Warner's study of a small town in Illinois brought to it a definite urban viewpoint, and thus he was one of the few urban-oriented social scientists to approach the rural small community on some of its own terms. Democracy in Jonesville (1949) studied the seemingly antagonistic principles of equality and the accepted notion of a class hierarchy in America. This perspective reflected Warner's belief that class determined, to a large extent, the nature of the social structure of all American communities, large or small. "To study Jonesville is to study America; it is a laboratory, a clinic, a field study for finding out what we are as a people and for learning why we think and feel and do the things we do. . . . we can say that Jonesville is in all Americans and all Americans are in Jonesville."⁴⁷

Warner and his associates brought the emphasis on class and status to Jonesville from research done for one of the most famous of community studies: the six-volume study of *Newburyport, Massachusetts* (collectively known as the *Yankee City series*). Warner and his various associates did the initial research between 1930 and 1935. Interested in how and why communities operated in terms of their social structures, Warner originally posited that economic classes would be sufficient for explaining the critical differences in a locally otherwise homogeneous society. But his observations of the New England community of 17,000 produced data which indicated a complex class system of six levels, which were not determined by economic influence alone, but rather in combination with social position and political power as well. This "discovery" of a well-developed system of social stratification challenged the long-accepted notion of widespread equalitarianism, not only in American ideals, but also in the actual social structure of American communities. Moreover, Warner found that even though most Americans espoused a strong egalitarianism, they were easily able to precisely rank other members of their community. Most observers now agree that

this view was a novel and controversial one in 1940. Thus, Warner got credit for bringing social class into the community picture as a prime determinant in social structure.

Therefore, after the publication of The Social Life of a Modern Community (1941), every subsequent community study was obliged to pay homage to Warner and social classes; most did, as was particularly evident in West's Plainville. Yet some communities could still be found in which the influence of social classes was minimal due to small population or homogeneity of the population, such as the communities in the USDA's Rural Life Studies.⁴⁸

In Jonesville, Warner found a fairly stable community of approximately 6,000 people, with the differences between town and country residents receding as the years went by. The local elite contained a wide spectrum of people including the cosmopolitan "squire farmers," conservative "old landowners," and the local industrialists, who all mixed and participated in the Jonesville "society crowd." But the class structure was rigid and resisted upward mobility. People from the "common man" class and especially from the "lower-lower" class had trouble moving up the social ladder. The lack of mobility in Jonesville concerned Warner, because "It is the dynamic, living process that keeps the class lines fluid." Unchanging class lines would give lie to the promise of the American Dream "that an ambitious person may rise to the top," and possibly create conditions which would lead to permanent class divisions featuring a new aristocracy. Yet, Warner did not hesitate from laying bare the implicit strictures which separated one class from another. "The highest crust is rewarded with deference; the lowest, often with ridicule, pity, or scorn. Knowing and recognizing their superiors and inferiors, the common men of Jonesville learn how to act properly with them. Everyone in Jonesville knows that inferiors must come last in line . . . and go first when there are heavy loads to carry The etiquette of deference in the democracy of Jonesville between inferiors and their superiors more often demands inflections of speech than outspoken admittance of superiority or inferiority, lest the speaker convict himself of being a boot-licker by his superiors or a snob and undemocratic by his

inferiors." Yet the very same system of stratification which magnified the class differences, worked to guard the less fortunate from open, public threats and abuse, but only to a point. "Social superiors and inferiors must be subtly recognized lest these American dogmas of equality be flouted, but this same code does not protect the lowly from covert attack and exploitation by their superiors. It is well for such people to know their place and to know how to act in it."⁴⁹

Warner's picture of Jonesville life was one of people carefully and craftily either stepping on or evading the proper cultural "toes." The upper-middle class, while obviously enjoying the fruits of larger incomes than the lower classes, was a group ridden with anxiety, lest they fail to conform to the standards and the cultural etiquette of high society. The upper-middle class had to walk a tight-rope of conspicuous consumption balanced with the appropriate amount of deference and respect shown to the upper class. They had to be ambitious without appearing aggressive and boorish. "They are anxious people, for in their eagerness to associate with those who are their social betters they are very fearful of doing something wrong and ruining their chances for advancement. . . . They are constantly on the alert to enter into worthy civic enterprises, particularly those in which men and women from the elite are active sponsors." If the upper-middle class posed little threat to the overall stability of the social system, neither did the more numerous "common man" class, which actually consisted of a "lower-middle" and an "upper-lower" class. Jonesville's working class was much smaller than Yankee City's, which initiated a major strike during the Depression. As a large rural-based market town with some industry, Jonesville never experienced the proletarianization of its workers. But Warner found mobility for workers anywhere unlikely: "The workers' 'stairway to the stars' in Jonesville and America is no longer an open highway. Climbing step by step to bigger and better jobs for most workers and their sons is a story of the past."⁵⁰

Despite the many heterogeneous factors which constituted Jonesville's social system, it achieved a degree of unity necessary to maintain the ordinary functions of the group. Warner placed a great deal of importance in "rituals which express a sacred symbol system functioning to integrate the whole community, with its conflicting symbols and its opposing, autonomous churches and associations." The community and its rituals provided some defense against enemies both near and far. This was especially important during World War II. "The Memorial Day rite and other subsidiary rituals connected with it form a cult which partially satisfies this need for common action on a common problem. It dramatically expresses the sentiments of equality and unity of all the living among themselves."⁵¹

Ultimately, Warner spoke to the relation between small town America and the evolving complex, mass society. American society needed to face the inevitable realities of systems of rank and position created by the need for a division of labor in a densely settled and highly populated modern society. Nevertheless the ideal of equality should not be discarded because to do so would undermine the worth of the individual, making the individual dependent on "principles of fixed status." Yet, Warner observed that extremists of the left and the right continually attacked the social reality of social class and the ideal of equality, respectively. Both phenomena were necessary for proper functioning of American democracy. "If Americans by disinterest, lack of understanding, or apathy, allow the channels of mobility to be blocked, social and political catastrophe will certainly result, for a society of fixed status will then govern our lives. It might be fascist, communist, or have some other authoritarian or totalitarian political name attached to it, but the underlying social reality will be the same. For our democratic system, in which people can compete for social reward, can survive only as long as the principles of rank are tempered by those of equality."⁵²

By the mid-1950s, the field of community research had witnessed nearly a half century of multifarious studies ranging from communities of Stone Age people to complex urban

neighborhoods in some of the largest cities in the world. Rural sociologists had studied a host of rural communities and small villages; Warner and the Lynds had analyzed small cities and introduced the public to the impact of the concepts of social class and industrialization on the community; sociologist Robert Park and his disciples had identified a phalanx of urban neighborhoods and presented their intricate social dynamics; and towns large and small had been researched representing all the regions of the United States. Still, even after all that evaluatory work, the field lacked a simple, clear, standard working definition of the community, not to mention an adequate theory. Sociologist George Hillery noted this state of affairs in an article in Rural Sociology (1955). "Among sociologists, . . . , concepts have attained such a degree of heterogeneity that it is difficult to determine whether any one of the resulting definitions, or even any one group of definitions, affords an adequate description." Hence, Hillery studied ninety-four definitions of the term "community" to see if any areas of agreement existed. He found that most definitions included the ideas of geographic area and social interaction, plus the concept of people being connected by one or more additional common ties. Of course, those common ties were often expressed in varying terminology such as "a feeling of self-sufficiency," "a common life," "a consciousness of kind," or "a possession of shared ends, norms, or means." He concluded that of all the groups of community researchers, only rural sociologists accepted the above community components with unanimity. Urban community researchers strayed the farthest from this definition, most likely because of the greater heterogeneity of their subject matter.⁵³

Not only was the definition of community problematic, but theorizing was an even more difficult challenge, given the vast differences in community size, scope, and function. What was needed was a theoretical stance which identified and probed the cultural bedrock underlying the bifurcated social realities of American small communities being increasingly drawn into a mass society with international dimensions. By training, anthropologists brought a wholistic orientation to the study of human social organization, and thus were

natural candidates for such an assignment. In The Little Community (1955), anthropologist Robert Redfield recognized the small community as a common-sense whole which appeared generally in human experience. "In all parts of the world, in all of human history, there are and have been little communities." Like the integral cultural entities of a person, a people (such as the Navaho, the Lapp, etc.), a nation, or a civilization, the little community was another prevailing and recognizable form of humanity. Redfield believed that the human world is "made up in the first place of ideas and ideals;" the human environment was largely mental, and only partially connected with adaptation for survival. Therefore, he looked for a concept "that will describe the inside view" of community, or how its members thought about it.⁵⁴

Redfield located that organizing principle in what he called the "folk-civilization continuum." Every community was a unique blend of traditional folk society and modern urban mass society. "In every isolated little community there is civilization; in every city there is the folk society." On the continuum, every community fell between the polar ideal types of the older small, self-sufficient, homogeneous, sacred, tribal village and the heterogeneous, secular, individualistic, densely-settled metroplex. Both organizational types were present to some extent in communities, but it was their tension within the mixture, a "dialectic of opposites," which was the key to understanding the little community. Thus, one needed to look at Plainville or Middletown as examples of interpenetration of folkways and urbanways; particular combinations which could be compared and contrasted in their community syntheses. "In Plainville and in Middletown the limits of the community cannot be adequately defined in spatial terms. . . . Where there are travel, newspapers, radio, and television, the meaningful limits of the little community can have no territorial definition; there is no line to be drawn around the community to define where it is." So, we "find ourselves defining the community not in terms of space but in terms of a position relative to

two kinds of human collective living, as just this local and particular arrangement of aspects of the one in relation to aspects of the other."⁵⁵

Redfield not only sought a productive theoretical orientation on the little community, but approached the issue of the most descriptive and valuable language through which to better understand the community phenomenon. He opted for a position of the center, between "works of fiction and personal impressions on one side and analyses of parts of our whole, in the manner of behavioral sciences, on the other side." Although he hoped for a precise, comparative science of human wholes, he observed that "The study of human wholes lies today in a borderland between science and art." But he believed that the study of community "is part of the business and the joy of human living, and needs to be carried on whether or not there is a strictly behavioral science." Echoing in part Robert Lynd's complaints and admonitions about the role of scientific research in modern society and its implications for a more fruitful understanding of real communities, Redfield proposed that those who study the little community "need not be too much worried about the relation of what we do to that current halfgod, natural science, or its avatar in the world of the social, the behavioral sciences. . . . Understanding, and her apotheosis, wisdom, are the true gods within the temple; science is not; she is only a handmaiden, and serves with many others." Redfield objected to the potential marginalization of areas of social science which dealt with the community in its totality, such as anthropology and, by the fifties, the old-fashioned comprehensive community studies by sociologists like the Lynds, Warner, and West. It was their "common duty" to bring forward all data on the community, no matter what its source, for review and questioning by their peers. "For understanding is increased and the needs of mankind are met by any and all honest descriptions, responsible to the facts and intellectually defensible."⁵⁶

Three years after Redfield proposed his rural-urban continuum in The Little Community, sociologists Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman called into question Redfield's

entire theoretical schema by means of an "honest description" of their own. Small Town in Mass Society (1958) implicitly rejected the idea of communities as mixtures of folk societies and urban civilizations. Ten years later, as a classic work of community research, Vidich and Bensman explicitly condemned the concept in the introduction to the revised edition: "the penetration of the 'isolated' community by the agencies and culture of mass institutions has . . . [transformed] the community within the framework of large-scale, bureaucratic mass society rather than as the polar opposite of urban society. [The book] help[ed] to abolish the notion that there is a dichotomous difference between urban and rural, sacred and secular, mechanical and organic forms of social organization." Thus with one quick sweep, the authors attempted to clear the community playing field of the traditionally dominant theoretical dualisms of anthropologist Redfield and sociologists Howard Becker and Emile Durkheim. Although Vidich and Bensman did not declare the death of the small town, they did proclaim the demise of its ability to generate indigenous values. Mass culture had become ubiquitous, and subsumed and engulfed all locales in its path. Not only had the small community lost the power to control its own value system, but it "lacks the power to control the institutions that regulate and determine its existence." Small towns had not only entered the orbit of the metropolitan-dominated mass society, but were now subject to its pervasive processes of assimilation and homogenization. Therefore, by the late fifties, even the terms "rural" and "urban" were losing their significance to some observers. America became populated by the "Organization Man," "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit," and "other-directed" people.⁵⁷

Originally, Vidich and Bensman intended to conduct a traditional study of a rural community and describe its relationships with the larger society. But by the time they arrived at their research site (an upstate New York town they named Springdale), the process of being drawn into mass society was far advanced. The perspective of mass society entered the community through various individuals, groups, and institutions. Leaders or officials in

local organizations having contact with the outside society or branches of outside institutions brought new values into play. Both state and federal governments, local and national corporations, service clubs, and even representatives of religious denominations brought both new information into the community and made decisions affecting it. The authors discovered what they considered to be a fundamental contradiction between Springdalers' basic beliefs and how they chose to act in response to their new circumstances. "The public enactment of community life and public statements of community values seemed to bear little relationship to the community's operating institutions and the private lives of its members." This contradiction grew out of a deep-seated ambivalence the authors found characteristic of rural life. The community resented the onslaught of mass culture and its seeming superiority. Springdalers disliked and were suspicious of urban life; yet, they were drawn to the wealth, power, and ability to make important changes in society often exhibited by the metropolitan world. But the authors found that the most creative community responses to perceived external threats were those designed to thwart urban moves or make them more difficult. Since community leaders attempted to stifle all change, regardless of its origin, the "holding action" against the outside world often worked contrary to Springdale's needs. The community bemoaned the intrusion of "urban centers and institutions which by the process of invidious comparison devalued by their very pervasiveness all that the community was, stood for and believed in."⁵⁸

But not all of Springdale's 2,500 residents participated in this near-apocalyptic struggle. Like Warner's Jonesville, Springdale exhibited a multi-class local society, although one lacking in a true upper class. Vidich and Bensman called it the "Old Aristocracy" and identified it as having the highest prestige based on old money; but along with the "Shack People" (the lowest of the low), and the "Traditional Farmers," who were largely segregated from the "Middle Class" and the "Marginal Middle Class," they played little if any role in the social and political life of the community. The businessmen, larger dairy farmers, and

professional people largely made the civic decisions and set the standards for status and behavior. The real power was held by a very small group of people the authors called the "invisible" government, which usually made the decisions behind the scenes. The local bosses were able to control local government operations chiefly because of the apathy and dullness of the electorate which demanded little or no real political debate from its officials. The leaders of village government interpreted their roles as maintainers of the status quo, and they accomplished that goal by supporting positions of low taxes and low public expenditures. Proposals for change were usually mildly opposed, then actively resisted, and finally allowed to take place under private auspices or co-opted if activists persisted in seeking public backing.⁵⁹

All activities, whether they represented change or not, took place against a background of community values and attitudes. Much like Plainville and Jonesville, Springdale's core values centered on those 19th century attributes of the pioneer ethos: equality, local self-reliance, participatory democracy, the individualism of economic "independence," frugality, and the neighborliness which accompanied the myth of being just "plain folks." The business people exemplified these values the most, despite being caught up intimately in the sales and distribution systems of the mass society. They preached hard work, saving, and industriousness in the face of an increasingly competitive marketplace and slipping status. They reacted to a diminishing customer base by competing more fiercely and lowering their profit margins. This led to an extremely conservative outlook and contributed to the stultifying conformism reported by Vidich and Bensman. "As a result, [the businessman] lives in an atmosphere of social and economic scarcity relative to his position thirty years ago and relative to other segments of the community. This accounts for the dominant psychology of scarcity-mindedness characteristic . . . of the business class." The former boosters and leaders of the community had become "sticks in the mud."⁶⁰

However, a Springdaler would never say that in public. Unlike Mineville, gossip in Springdale, although it played a very important role, was separated into more rigid public and private spheres. The public sphere was characterized by being friendly to everyone; even long-time enemies spoke to each other. The private sphere was reserved for the negativity, back-biting, and judgments usually associated with small-town gossip. But like Mineville, Springdalers observed "an etiquette of public conversation which always emphasized the positive." Less homogeneous than Mineville, Springdale's wider occupational range tended to segment and compartmentalize gossip; although people still knew of each other's business, the desire for privacy was a real and growing phenomenon, spurred on by a rising new middle class of urban migrants and professionals. Still they too were forced to observe much of the small-town tradition: "At the public level all types of success are given public recognition while failure is treated with silence. It is because of the double and separate set of communication channels that negative gossip seldom colors the friendly ethos and the successful mood of the public life of the community."⁶¹

Vidich and Bensman found that Springdale community life was being transformed by the "middle-class revolution" of which other sociologists such as C. Wright Mills, David Riesman, and William F. Whyte had written. In Springdale, the new middle class had not yet entered politics, but its influence was felt in local social organizations and the "push" of their lifestyles. They eschewed the naive optimism of the 19th century and the defensiveness of the 1930s, and embraced the consumer optimism related to the more directed, expanding economy and security of national corporations enmeshed in the "managed" mass society of the 1950s and 1960s. As part of the generation which had benefited from the GI Bill, they were firm believers in the benefits of mass education and higher education. They sought out greater recreational and leisure opportunities, and espoused more liberal social views which made frontier fundamentalism appear gauche and anachronistic. They eased up on the tight reins of the traditional stance toward deferred gratification. In the public sphere, this attitude

translated into calls for more enlightened social services, which included not just the traditional demand for better roads, but excellent schools, parks, pools, community centers, and so on. The new middle class tended to look toward the metropolplex and much less toward the older rural society, even though they may have eagerly accepted the advantages of country living. Perhaps this was true because most of the new middle class was part of the one-third of all Springdalers who worked outside of the community. In the long run, the authors speculated that as the middle class achieved a critical size it would challenge the dominance of the older local groups: "In the threat to its leadership the older group see that it not only faces the loss of community leadership and higher real estate taxes but also the defeat of its entire way of life." This confrontation, not the suffocation of mobility and the rise of fixed status levels as Warner feared in Jonesville, would constitute the gravest danger for American society.⁶²

Springdalers did not accept defeat of their values quite so readily though, despite "their personal impotence in the face of larger events and any failure in their way of life. By techniques of self-avoidance and self-deception, they strive to avoid facing issues which, if recognized, would threaten the total fabric of their personal and social existence." Vidich and Bensman saw the ultimate quality of modern small-town life as one of mediocrity and a scene of forced compromise and unwilling accommodation to forces of mass society which treated all small places basically the same, but from which Springdalers recoiled and took personally. They settled for less because they believed they had not lost the battle. "Because they do not recognize their defeat, they are not defeated." Unlike Plainvillers who watched their rural world disintegrate in front of their eyes, some Springdalers entrenched themselves for the long struggle. The authors ended their somewhat bleak and negative assessment of Springdale with the observation that "Life consists in making an adjustment that is as satisfactory as possible within a world which is not often tractable to basic wishes and desires."⁶³

Although Vidich and Bensman differed with Warner on the trends in community life most threatening to the stability of American society, they agreed on the most likely undesirable outcome. "Populism gone sour could become the source of an antidemocratic, quasi-totalitarian reaction which in spite of its origins in an earlier democratic ideology could turn against the new cultural styles evolving in our society." A refusal by the traditional rural elite to modify adherence to "romanticized images of the past" could form the basis of a fascistic movement anathema to the democratic creed. "An organized nativistic movement based partly on a xenophobic isolationism could shelter under its cover not only defensive populists but a variety of other groups whose resentments are less crystallized"64

Vidich and Bensman obviously underestimated the allure, power, and compelling (some might argue for a coercive-like force) nature of mass society to remold America in its own image, and overestimated the ability of older, local elites to overcome their somewhat isolated and provincial outlook and thus join with like-minded individuals across the country in a super-nativist revolution. Indeed, the penetration of mass society into formerly isolated villages and hamlets so irretrievably transformed rural society as to disallow even the most fervent ruralists, much less social scientists, from thinking about "turning back the hands of time." Rural sociologists did concern themselves with stemming or redirecting the course of change, however, in favor of stabilization of rural places. Beginning in the 1960s and continuing to the present, social scientists sensed that not just the importance or even the significance of the small rural community was at stake, but that its very survival was in question.⁶⁵

Rural sociologist Lowry Nelson applied this concern in the form of a whole state study of rural life in The Minnesota Community (1960). He observed that Minnesota had a relatively long history of settled agriculture, but had experienced the same, often abrupt transformations in farming since 1940 as most other heavily agricultural states. Thus, it was a relatively typical example of states that exhibited both strong agricultural and

urban/industrial sectors. In addition, Minnesota boasted a well-developed rural society with twice as many incorporated places under 5,000 people as the national average. In addition, tenancy was part of a proud tradition of eventual ownership, and not a condition of stigma. Tenants participated on an equal footing with farm owners in the life of the local community. "Minnesota appears to be a favorable habitat for the small town, probably because of the great importance of the role such centers play in the economy of the region, serving as . . . connecting links between the city and the farm."⁶⁶

The great threat rural communities faced was devolution caused by the diminution in population. The decrease in the number of farms and farm people was part of a nationwide phenomenon, but was particularly distressing for a geographically large state like Minnesota with a still vibrant agricultural economy. Added to that was the mood of many national leaders at mid-century to encourage the out-migration from rural areas as a way to keep farming efficient and provide a sufficient labor pool for expanding corporate America. These same spokespeople also argued that criticisms claiming a lower quality of individuals and of rural life in general as a result of out-migration had not been proven. Lowry himself argued that the quality of life has risen dramatically in rural areas since World War II. Nevertheless, rural Minnesota was being exposed to another round of rising expectations driven largely by the mass-media creation of wants and desires. "The farm family is now being subjected to the influences that once made life so difficult for urbanites. Family life in rural Minnesota is faced with the necessity of adapting to the urban-industrial world, not only economically, which is apparent to all, but also socially and psychologically." Nelson accepted the need for social change, but wondered if the price for better education, housing, communication, and basic consumer goods should be at the expense of the small community, especially those places under 250, 52 percent of which lost population between 1940 and 1950.⁶⁷

While Nelson noted that the factors which favored further rural decline seemed balanced by more than enough factors to maintain present farm population, he expected further declines in both farm numbers and farm population. People were the basis of life for small towns, so whatever threatened farming also threatened small towns. He argued therefore that small towns needed special attention and help. In response to the problems of townships being too small an area for an efficient unit of government and the counties too big to properly address certain local issues, Nelson advocated a novel new unit of government to be based on the local trade area, which might in many cases also approximate the local school district. "Such a plan would bring village and farm people into close collaboration to support other services than education, and many opportunities for more and better services would result. . . . Town and country are really not independent anymore, if they ever were." As far as Minnesota's "problem area" of the Cutover, this formerly forested region of the northern part of the state was beginning to see agricultural adjustment take place, with communities holding their own through a gradual transformation of the economy to a more part-time farming and tourist-oriented rural society.⁶⁸

Nelson proposed a second main idea for the promotion of healthy rural communities. Harkening back to the 1930s, he revived the concept of decentralization of industry. From his point of view the only thing impeding the spread of small plants to rural towns was corporate inertia. If some of the rural population could maintain off-farm income, the all-important psychological factors of certainty and optimism would return with the increased economic stability. A further consequence of minor industrialization of rural places would be the continued integration of town and country, which Nelson called "the key word of the future." "The old isolation of farms and farm communities has been abolished by the revolutions in both transportation and communication. . . . Farmers are part of the mass society. . . . [and] are bound up in the great political community: the world itself." Farmers were part of a worldwide network, and should be welcomed and enabled to join that larger

world whole-heartedly. In something of both a plea and paean, Nelson concluded that "The new farmer is an educated man alert to these worldwide developments, aware of his own importance as a member of society and of the importance of his local community. He is in charge of a very complicated enterprise valued at, say, \$50,000 or more. Of necessity, he will require advanced education not only in technology of agriculture but in the science of society itself." Although historically rural life tended to lag behind the urban world and still did so by 1960 in several important areas of quality of life, it was apparent to most observers that it ran in a similar, if not equivalent, direction largely initiated by cities. As historian Thomas E. Williams noted: "Rural America's energy was being consumed in trying to adapt the latest technological and scientific innovations affecting its economy and culture, and in struggling to maintain enough of the trappings of a modern consumer society to hold its youth."⁶⁹

Quite suddenly it had dawned on social scientists, whether rural or urban oriented, that the reality of mass society was such that it was a new civilizational type, an all-encompassing cultural force which conditioned in similar ways community phenomena which had previously been conceived of as separate, discrete, and qualitatively different, such as cities, suburbs, and even small towns. The study by Vidich and Bensman opened peoples' eyes in a startling way to the vigor and thoroughness of mass society's operation on an ordinary, not even particularly isolated, small town. Many Springdalers were left bewildered, befuddled, and supremely frustrated in their contacts with mass society, and even denied dealing with it, much less working with it. It was this psychological dimension which grabbed the attention of many scholars in the community field, because it was widely assumed that communities had to have not only a territorial component, but also a psychological condition of belongingness created by the dimension of social interaction in a community. The "loss" of community due to disruption by mass society could then be used to explain the rise of alienation, isolation, and anomie. Sociologist Maurice Stein assumed that the classic

community studies of the twenties and thirties did just that, and based his theory of communities within mass society on the three classic studies by Robert Park, the Lynds, and Lloyd Warner. Stein claimed that each study emphasized a particular cultural force, urbanization, industrialization, and bureaucratization respectively, which, when taken together, could account for the enormous changes visible in Western civilization. "All of these studies during the 20's and 30's, then, show increasing standardization of community patterns throughout the country with agencies of nationwide diffusion and control acting as centers of innovation." Stein's The Eclipse of Community (1960) declared its intention to form a theory of relating community studies of different places and different times in a single theoretical framework. "Relationships between studies rests upon the assumption that similar social forces are at work in the separate communities. Social theories about the forces transforming Western society during the past four centuries converge on three kinds of processes--urbanization, industrialization, and bureaucratization, as the central sources of change. Such theorists as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel, and Mannheim may emphasize one or the other, but all recognize the three as being involved in fundamental social change." Stein also utilized community studies written in the forties and fifties as "more advanced cases" of mass society, including Springdale as an example. Thus, Stein's effort proposed to be a "systematic investigation of community processes in historical perspective."⁷⁰

The development of mass society also affected the very definition of urban place, and its close cousin, suburbia. By implication, it influenced the perceptions and conceptions of rural places too, because the nature of mass society appeared to be that of a giant blender, homogenizing all settlement types within the reach of its whirling cultural blades. The rise of neo-suburbia (post World War II suburbs) caused social scientists to compare the suburban form to the traditional conceptions of the urban way of life. One upshot was the apparent refutation of Louis Wirth's long-standing definition of the city by sociologist Herbert Gans in 1962. Wirth had promulgated his classic definition in 1938, and it stated

simply that the city was "a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals." This definition typified the prevalent feeling about the city as impersonal, anonymous, and full of unattached, isolated people. Gans marshalled an impressive array of evidence to prove that urban places indeed did have what could be called communities, especially in what Gans labeled the "outer city" and the suburbs. "As concerns ways of life, the inner city must be distinguished from the outer city and the suburbs; and the latter two exhibit a way of life bearing little resemblance to Wirth's urbanism." Additionally, Wirth's urban criteria did not seem to fit even the urban core very well: "Even in the inner city, ways of life resemble Wirth's description only to a limited extent. Moreover, economic condition, cultural characteristics, life-cycle stage, and residential instability explain ways of life more satisfactorily than number, density, or heterogeneity." Finally, there did not seem to be too much difference in the sorts of social and psychological experiences people had in the city as opposed to the suburbs. They did the same kinds of things like own homes, socialize with their neighbors, attend school functions, and so on. "Physical and other differences between city and suburb are often spurious or without much meaning for ways of life." Gans called into question Redfield's community dichotomy of the folk society on one side and Wirth's urban society on the other. Gans thus suggested that the city was not the opposite of the folk society. Also, he was interested in proving that at least "quasi-primary" relationships were able to exist in both urban and suburban places, despite the pressures of mass society to make them into secondary relationships. Inferentially then, if primary relationships of a kind could exist in urban-suburban places, social scientists could hope that they could endure in rural places as well. Mass society was dominant, but not omnipotent.⁷¹

One of the major themes in American history has been the relationship of the locale to the larger territory. The concepts of nationalism, democracy, equality, freedom, and individualism have figured prominently in that balancing act. Social scientists, many of whom were rural sociologists, studied this equation from the perspective of the small

community throughout the present century. For roughly the first forty years, community observers could utilize the model of the center versus the periphery to construct the balance between locale and territory. The small rural community generally retained its hold on the periphery as it had done for the previous three hundred years. But especially after World War II, the uniqueness and forcefulness of a "new order of society," the mass society, could no longer be ignored as it restructured the relationship of community to the larger society. As sociologist Edward Shils noted in the early sixties, "The novelty of the 'mass society' lies in the relationship of the mass of the population to the center of the society. The relationship is a closer integration into the central institutional and value systems of the society." For Shils, mass society was an industrially-structured, bureaucratically-arranged, large-scale, secularizing, welfare-oriented society. It was also characterized by the growth in consensuality and individuality, as products of an enhanced dignity for average people. Furthermore, the center of society had expanded creating a greater attachment of elites to the people. Finally, society had greater recourse to civil politics, which diminished the role of the sacred order and contributed to greater moral equality of the various social strata. In short, Shils opposed those commentators who "stressed alienation, belieflessness, atomization, amorality, conformity, rootless homogeneity, moral emptiness, facelessness, egotism, and the utter evaporation of any kind of loyalty (except occasionally the passionately zealous attachment to an ideological movement)," as the only or even the most important phenomena attributable to mass society. Its impact on small communities created a different set of problems than the traditional concerns of rural poverty, isolation, ignorance, and backwardness. Some of the same problems experienced by urbanites began to appear in rural communities too. Social scientists recognized that the cultural distance between center and periphery had collapsed, and that there were no longer two distinct types of society—urban and rural. Small communities continued to exist, but their roles and functions were undergoing, in many cases, a process of radical reordering and rearrangement, some of which

seemed to jeopardize their physical integrity and viability. For better or worse, mass society had altered the balance between locale and territory in ways with which social scientists were still trying to come to grips.⁷²

NOTES

1. Robert S. Lynd, Knowledge for What? (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939), ix, 11; Larry Lyon, The Community in Urban Society (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 14.
2. Lynd, 84-85, 207, 219, 239. William S. Graebner, The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s (Boston: Twayne, 1991), xi; Richard H. Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 121-125.
3. Lowry Nelson, Rural Sociology: Its Origins and Growth in the United States (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1969), 8-12; for the Country Life Movement see David Danbom, The Resisted Revolution (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979) and William L. Bowers, The Country Life Movement in America, 1900-1920 (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1974)
4. Liberty Hyde Pailey, Outlook to Nature (New York: MacMillan, 1908), 93; Liberty Hyde Bailey, The State and the Farm (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 72, 87, 120, 121; Nelson, 14-16.
5. Nelson, 18-20; Kenyon Butterfield, Chapters in Rural Progress (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1907), 5, 9, 233-251.
6. Charles J. Galpin, "Rural Life," American Journal of Sociology 35 (May 1930): 1010-1016.
7. Zimmerman quoted in Nelson, 42, 37-42; Lowry Nelson, Rural Sociology (New York: American Book, 1948), 72; Dwight Sanderson and Robert A. Polson, Rural Community Organization (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1939), 50; Roland L. Warren, The Community in America (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1963), 4; Roland L. Warren, "Toward a Reformulation of Community Theory," in Perspectives on the American Community, ed., Roland L. Warren (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), 69.
8. Warren, The Community in America, 32-33; Richard Jensen, "The Lynds Revisited," Indiana Magazine of History 75 (December 1979): 303-305, 318; Nelson, Rural Sociology: Its Origin and Growth, 213, stated that rural sociologist Newell Sims claimed that the Lynds failed to cite three works which appeared before Middletown: James William's An American Town (1906); Warren Wilson's Quaker Hill (1908); and Sim's study, A Hoosier Village (1912).

9. Jensen, 303-305; Dwight Hoover, "Middletown Again," in Prospects 15, ed. Jack Salzman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 445-449; Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown: A Study in American Culture (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1929), 5-6.

10. Lynd and Lynd, 38, 87.

11. Jensen, 307; Lynd and Lynd, 59-76, 82, 87, 88, 188, 434.

12. Lynd and Lynd, 258-259, 271, 312.

13. *Ibid.*, 469, 343, 495, 500.

14. Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflict (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937), 466-468.

15. *Ibid.*, 188; see Maurice R. Stein's effort in The Eclipse of Community (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1960) to construct a framework for relating the classic community studies (Middletown, Lloyd Warner's "Yankee City," and Robert Park's Chicago studies) to each other in an attempt to construct a theory of American community life. He believed that the above studies highlighted the analytical categories of industrialization, bureaucratization, and urbanization respectively, and that these types could then be applied as something approaching independent variables in subsequent analyses. But Stein himself noted that "Urbanization and industrialization are obviously deeply interwoven during the twenties." (p.55) Park saw industrialization as a prime factor in social change, while the Lynds found that urbanization merged with industrialization in such a way as to produce culture *sui generis*. Neither process stood alone or could be used as a separate analytical component. See Alan I Marcus and Howard P. Segal, Technology in America: A Brief History (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1989), for a discussion of the transformation of American culture from a worldview based on "system" to one of "network," where the sum of the parts was equal to or greater than the whole and the components were known for how they fit together in the whole, not for their own special, discrete natures.

16. E. W. Burgess, editor's preface to Small-Town Stuff, Albert Blumenthal (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), ix, xiii-xiv; Albert Blumenthal, Small-Town Stuff, 403, xv.

17. Blumenthal, 405.

18. *Ibid.*, 39, 40, 49.

19. *Ibid.*, 66-68.

20. Ibid., 110, 120.
21. Ibid., 145.
22. Ibid., 278, 185-186, 400.
23. Ibid., 404, 408, 405.
24. Ibid., 409; Whiting Williams, "America's Main Streets," Saturday Review of Literature 8 (May 14, 1932): 729.
25. James West, Plainville, U. S. A. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 3, 56.
26. Ibid., 58-67, 115; Don Martindale and R. Galen Hanson, Small Town and the Nation (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1969), 5.
27. West, 162, 198.
28. Ibid., 221, 224, 219, 225.
29. Ibid., 225-226. In 1954, sociologist Art Gallaher revisited Plainville and conducted a new study, taking up where West left off. Gallaher reported substantial change from 1939. Points of contact with the mass culture had expanded, mainly due to the coming of World War II, a new cross-country highway through the middle of Plainville village, the response of businesses to cater to the outsiders, and the rapid increase in technological and productive capacities of surrounding farms. New needs were created which Plainvillers increasingly used modern technology to solve. Commercialism rose, less work was done collectively, dependence on external authority grew, and even the expectation of change increased. Plainvillers "are intimately involved in a mass society which deprecates [old-fashioned] values, and which does, in fact, encourage, pressure, and cajole them to accelerate the urbanization process." "Urbanizing Influences in Plainville," America as a Mass Society, ed. Philip Olson (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 202.
30. Edward O. Moe and Carl C. Taylor, Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: Irwin, Iowa, Rural Life Studies, no. 5 (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1942), forward.
31. Ibid., 9-11, 25.
32. Ibid., 51-53.
33. Ibid., 63-65.
34. Ibid., 67, 69, 72, 73.

35. Ibid., 78, 83.

36. Ibid., 89, 92, 93.

37. Interestingly, Corn Belt farmers succumbed to such temptations again in the "boom" times of the 1970s. Earl H. Bell, Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: Sublette, Kansas, Rural Life Studies, no. 2 (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1942), 109.

38. Ibid., 109-111, 113.

39. Kenneth MacLeish and Kimball Young, Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: Landaff, New Hampshire, Rural Life Studies, no. 3 (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1942), 117.

40. Waller Wynne, Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: Harmony, Georgia, Rural Life Studies, no. 6 (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1943), 57-58.

41. Olen Leonard and Charles Loomis, Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: El Cerrito, New Mexico, Rural Life Studies, no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: USDA, 1941), 70-71, 72; Warren, The Community in America, 104.

42. Charles P. Loomis, "Rebuilding American Community Life," American Sociological Review 5 (June 1940): 311-312, 316, 318, 323.

43. Carle Zimmerman, The Changing Community (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1938), 3, 649, 651, 652-653.

44. Nelson, Rural Sociology, 94, 523, 527.

45. Walter M. Kollmorgen and Robert W. Harrison, "The Search for the Rural Community," Agricultural History 20 (January 1946): 1, 3, 2, 5.

46. Walter Goldschmidt, As You Sow (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1947; repr. Montclair, New Jersey: Allanheld, Osmun & Co., 1978), xvii, xix-xx, 281-285, 423.

47. W. Lloyd Warner, et. al., Democracy in Jonesville (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1949), xv.

48. W. Lloyd Warner and Paul S. Hunt, The Social Life of a Modern Community (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941); see also William Lloyd Warner, Yankee City (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963). Valuable commentary on Warner is found in Lyon, 225-236, and Stein, 70-93.

49. Warner, Democracy in Jonesville, 76, 75, 23.
50. Ibid., 27, 114.
51. Ibid., 290, 291.
52. Ibid., 297-298.
53. George A. Hillary, "Definitions of Community: Areas of Agreement," Rural Sociology 20 (June 1955): 111-123.
54. Robert Redfield, The Little Community (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1955), 1, 30, 32.
55. Ibid., 146, 148, 146-147.
56. Ibid., 161, 163, 167, 168.
57. Arthur Vidich and Joseph Bensman, Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power, and Religion in a Rural Community, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), vii, xviii.
58. Ibid., xviii, 318.
59. Ibid., 49-78, 212-214.
60. Ibid., 29-40, 90.
61. Ibid., 44, 45.
62. Ibid., 333-344, 346. See the following for analyses of the emerging mass society: C. Wright Mills, White Collar: The American Middle Classes (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), and William H. Whyte, The Organization Man (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957).
63. Ibid., 314.
64. Ibid., 346-347.
65. Martindale and Hanson, 10.
66. Lowry Nelson, The Minnesota Community (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1960), 12, 29.

67. Ibid., 31, 69, 82.

68. Ibid., 111, 146.

69. Ibid., 162, 163; Thomas E. Williams, "Rural America in an Urban Age, 1945-1960," in Reshaping America: Society and Institutions, 1945-1960, eds. Robert H. Bremner and Gary W. Rienhard (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 159.

70. Stein, 108, 4-5, 9.

71. Herbert J. Gans, "Urbanism and Suburbanism as Ways of Life: A Re-Evaluation of Definitions," in The Study of Society: an Integrated Anthology, ed. Peter I. Rose (New York: Random House, 1967), 240, 234; Louis Wirth, "Urbanism as a Way of Life," American Journal of Sociology 44 (July 1938): 50.

72. Edward Shils, "The Theory of Mass Society," in America as a Mass Society, ed. Philip Olson (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 32, 45.

CHAPTER 5
THE UTOPIAN SMALL COMMUNITY

Few publications represented the utopian urge in the search for the small community as much as the journal Free America. Although it assiduously attempted to put forward an appearance of practicality and reasonableness, it could not help but trumpet the view that an ideal place existed if people would simply adopt the proper social structure--one of decentralized, small, semi-self-sufficient, village-like settlements where people cooperated extensively in some critical areas of production and distribution. The format never changed in its ten year run beginning in 1937; one aspect which elicited attention was the small drawings which appeared here and there throughout each issue, ostensibly to illustrate the major point of an article or better represent the particular author's vision.

But the pictures also functioned to put into visual form the editors' vision of what a modern, up-to-date utopia would look like, at least physically. For example, at the top of a regular feature called "The Changing Order," the editors placed a drawing of a small, circular, village green, surrounded by a driveway with small stores of modern design arranged in a semi-circular pattern. Cars were parked on the ends of the semi-circle and people walked between a co-op, a credit union, and the post office. Farm houses and neatly laid-out fields with well-kept fences formed the background. At the top of an article by the New England Distributists, a group dedicated to the "crystallization of agrarian-decentralist thought," the editors located a drawing of a rural scene, centered on a village surrounded by farm homesteads. But the dominating feature of the picture was high-voltage power lines sweeping across the valley. Other drawings bearing definite utopian overtones included a well-lit home workshop, two people building their own modern, two-story country house,

and a contented, well-fed cow in an article on the "productive home." In a report on small businesses, the artist placed a person standing at a crossroads, the road in one direction leading him to a smoke-choked city congested and money hungry, while the other direction led to small, clean town where traffic flowed smoothly and trees and the quality of life were valued above "the almighty dollar." As with any vision of utopia, the choice was always clear and simple. In this case, the decentralists (the most coherent and consistent advocates of a comprehensive program for the small community in the forties) promoted a perspective which celebrated associational human activity on a small scale, set amidst a well-managed, but not overly defined nature, utilizing a blend of hand and power tools, with business conducted on a "handshake" basis. Utopia was not some far off, exotic place, but could be right in one's own backyard, neighborhood, or town.¹

Besides the agrarians (who will be discussed in a later chapter) and the institutional regionalists and social scientists (previously discussed), the most well-known advocates of the small community in the forties all hued to the distributist-decentralist philosophy. Of these, Ralph Borsodi represented the small communitarian with the longest uninterrupted "track record" in the movement. Raised on a diet of single-taxer Henry George and back-to-the-lander Bolton Hall, Borsodi became one of the most recognizably dogmatic of distributists, after he left his position as marketing consultant for many of New York City's largest firms. As a social philosopher, writer, housing specialist, economic consultant, New Deal social critic, and founder of several cooperative homestead settlements, Borsodi (1888-1977) railed habitually against industrialism as the greatest enemy of humanity. His picture of people enslaved by factory, machine, and bureaucratic collectivism clashed with the Jeffersonian ideal of a nation of small land-owning farmers. Indeed, Borsodi stood with other distributists, like the English literary figure Hilaire Belloc and Italian Father Luigi Ligutti, in calls for greater individual access to freedom-producing land and wealth-creating tools.²

Borsodi displayed amazing prescience in his magnum opus, This Ugly Civilization (published just before the stock market crash of 1929), by calling into question the frenetic buying and investing activities of the early consumer society. In this libertarian manifesto, he "repeats and updates the traditions of John Ruskin, William Morris and others, and their assault upon the repulsive and repressive nature of our machine age and factory system." But like the twentieth-century distributists and southern agrarians, such as John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Donald Davidson, Borsodi was not so much concerned with material well-being as he was with the psychological costs of capitalism. "This is an ugly civilization. It is a civilization of noise, smoke, smells, and crowds--of people content to live amidst the throbbing of its machines; the smoke and smells of its factories; the crowds and the discomforts of the cities of which it proudly boasts."³

Rural utopians like Borsodi responded to "mere" reformist plans with an active dislike of and hostility toward what they saw as ineffective governmental intervention and inappropriate influence by urban-dominated groups, like the early twentieth-century Country Life Movement. He viewed the efforts of the federal government, and its attendant social scientists, in rural matters as meddling in activities better left to local control. As a stalwart decentralist and philosophical anarchist, Borsodi blasted the national political system, characterizing it as a "necessary evil." He became furious at the increased levels of rural subsistence living during the 1930s, because they were largely involuntary responses to severe economic conditions and not the planned, utopian experiments he had proposed. Therefore, he launched a radical and thoroughgoing condemnation of Progressive Era and New Deal community thought. Doubting that the cause of the Great Depression was due to a lack of balance between production and consumption, as leading economists and the federal government claimed, Borsodi alleged that there was no way to get around insecurity inevitably produced "by dependence upon industrialism for the essentials of life." "There is no excuse for the folly with which most of us are surrendering to corporate and political

institutions, our possession of tangible property--land, homes, farms and businesses of our own--which alone can insure us the prosperity and security we seek." People willingly traded their "real" assets for the financial securities of bankers and brokers and promises of progress from politicians. But there still remained a chance at utopia--"the American dream of political liberty, of individual independence, of the pursuit of happiness . . . , in spite of the encircling blight of bigness and bureaucracy."⁴

Borsodi believed that the fundamental source of America's problems lay not only in the urban jungle, but in rural areas that were seen as backward, devitalized, and demoralized. He attributed many of the nation's difficulties to "intolerable" conditions in both places. Unemployment, bankruptcies, the threat of hunger, crowded living conditions, and broken dreams haunted both town and country. He realized that some people experimenting with rural life in the 1930s and 1940s did not want the social isolation and low living standards common on farms or the poverty and congestion of city life. Instead, they wanted the combined advantages of both. Too many people, however, either living in rural areas or migrating from cities, lacked solid preparation and productive tools to make a decent living in the country. To the many manuals and how-to books on returning to the land, Borsodi added his own--Flight From the City (1933), in which he emphasized the relearning of survival and craft skills and the production of more necessities on a homestead. He offered it as a "way out for a population evidently unhappy both in the city and in the country." Enlisting the help of a variety of alternative communitarians including Warren Wilson of the Town and Country department of the Presbyterian Church, Luigi Ligutti, and Clarence Pickett, in 1936, Borsodi founded the School of Living in Suffern, New York, for the same reason--to ostensibly transmit the knowledge and skills of self-help to those who wanted to practice a more rural, independent, self-reliant lifestyle. His underlying objective, however, lay in "establishing a research and experimental sociological laboratory [to prove] the scientific validity of decentralization."⁵

Borsodi held that the Depression confirmed the ultimate failure of industrial society. In his view, it eroded the essential goodness of human beings. In qualified agreement with a prime utopian characteristic, Borsodi believed people were perfectable, but not in a corrupted environment, which did away with what was for him, a natural law of independence. Additionally, he denied that all people had the same instinct for freedom: "in every age and in every region of the globe men have always consisted of three types of individuals: an immense majority of herd-minded men who have the characteristics which predatory, acquisitive, power-seeking ruthless men have in common, and a still smaller minority of quality-minded men." Narcotized by "fashion," the obsession of money-making, the "invisible hand" of the marketplace, and the "cult of progress," mass institutions and the "repetitive treadmill" of the factory system stymied the desire for enjoyment and even tended to preclude the development of the "quality-minded" individual. Working from a somewhat elitist point of view, Borsodi stated that the quality-minded people, of whom he cited educator Charles W. Eliot as a prime example, would provide the leadership necessary for others, who for one reason or another, were unable to achieve complete wisdom and understanding. Thus empowered, the masses would be able to partake in "comfort," a condition of mental and material well-being, as state of security and happiness. Thus, the real challenge in the reform of society did not reside so much in a broad-based populist revolution, but in enabling the sensitive, gifted few to reaffirm their destinies, in a sense quite similar to Jefferson's notion of an aristocracy of talent and virtue.⁶

The basic problem of modern society, according to Borsodi, stemmed from the factory system, which itself was based on large-scale mechanization. He noticed that although the American people were no longer startled by the appearance of new mechanical wonders, they maintained a certain uneasiness and even ambivalence toward the machine. Gadgets increased the power of the senses but somehow decreased the average person's feeling of control and effectiveness. As historian Merle Curti observed, Borsodi declared that the

machine compelled people to consume, not to simply live. People could not be free to pursue and create happiness until they controlled production and consumption, mastered the machine, and replaced the values fostered by machine-bred crass materialism with human-centered values. Borsodi recognized that this was easier said than done. He maintained that "the strain of repetitive work in our factories and offices, and the absence of creative and productive work in our homes, particularly for women, children, and the aged, is turning us into a race of neurotics."⁷

For Borsodi, the institutions of mass production not only oppressed and exploited human beings, but suppressed natural instincts. The system stifled and stultified conscious planning, intentionality and purpose, and individual responsibility--taken collectively, the utopian characteristic of order. The nature of industrial work denied the full expression of human nature by acting against humans' innate propensity to be thrifty, industrious, independent of spirit, and desirous of freedom. He rejected "the subtle hypocrisy with which [Western civilization] persuades the people to engage in the factory production of creature comforts while imposing conditions which destroy their capacity for enjoying them. With one hand it gives comforts--with the other hand it takes comfort itself away." While workers strove endlessly to achieve success and have comforts, many also hung perpetually on the edge of financial insecurity, always at the mercy of an economic system they could not control or significantly influence. Psychological instability went hand in hand with economic uncertainty. The whims of the free market cast a pall over the workers' ability to enjoy the material and cultural abundance, leaving life bereft of fulfillment and barren of beauty. In the "ugly civilization" Borsodi found waste, not natural patterns and meaning; he saw randomness and semi-chaos, which he contrasted with the promise of utopian order.⁸

The problems of the factory system could only be rectified by widespread domestic production occurring in the home, local workshop, or regional setting where accountability was more easily maintained. Decentralization of the "megamachine" (to use Lewis

Mumford's term) and generalized home production and consumption would reduce the factory sector to basic metal and industrial manufactures, and free millions to be masters of machines, not slaves to them. Borsodi argued ". . . it would end the power of exploiting them [the people] which ruthless, acquisitive, and predatory men now possess; it would free them for the conquest of comfort, beauty and understanding." It made no difference to Borsodi if the control of manufacturing was transferred from greedy capitalists to the government, however optimistically one assumed it to be benign in its authority. Perhaps playing off of Lynd's Knowledge for What? published in 1939, Borsodi's article "Planning: For What?," appearing in the same year, took issue with any version of a planned society, whether it was directed by impartial social scientists, or by the national government as George Soule, Herbert Croly, and others argued. "We search in vain for a clear description of the objective towards which *his* planned society is to be directed." Borsodi would never stand for any program which implied the subordination of the individual to the national purpose, assuming one could be recognized. "It is not planning that will save us, but what we plan to do. The ends and objectives of the planning about which George Soule writes are the preservation of industrial civilization by its political collectivization." Borsodi held to the promise of a thoroughgoing decentralization of production, distribution, and consumption, almost to the point of fanaticism, because he believed that it challenged and pierced the heart and soul of the modern industrial order (which he saw as a legitimized disorder).⁹

Borsodi located a great delusion in the way work and control of work was structured--in organizations of centralized mass production. "Decentralization begins with the repudiation of the greatest scientific lie of the ages. Fathered by Adam Smith, this great delusion is found at the beginning of every textbook on economics." What then, constituted the "greatest scientific lie of the ages?" He claimed that mass production was not nearly as efficient as capitalists, industrialists, and financiers maintained; and that productivity should not be the only meaningful measure of prosperity. Efficiency promoted for its own sake

tended to produce exploitation of people and environments not directly involved in the factory operations. Borsodi vociferously attacked mass production as being inherently wasteful; hidden costs such as advertising, financing, and accountancy drew down any advantage corporate manufacturers might have by virtue of the scale of operations. In his view, the greater the centralization, the greater were the costs of distribution. As he had shown in his insightful The Distribution Age (1927), inefficiencies were created by the higher costs of transportation and marketing, and were simply passed on to the consumer. In addition, huge manufacturing plants could externalize their environmental costs on massive scales, thereby threatening local and regional ecologies.¹⁰

The concept of individual freedom, so central to Borsodi's libertarian philosophy, suffered grievously at the hands of the mass production system. He assumed that people in the "state of nature," as it were, would seek some ordering of their lives through common sense ideas about what constituted normal work, play, rest, nutrition, and so on. Furthermore, Borsodi felt that people would naturally choose to direct their own lives and produce for themselves. The "fixation" with mass economic organizations not only denied ordinary people their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but it separated them from the land. Borsodi considered the opportunity to acquire land and start a homestead as a fundamental human right. He noted that the American capitalist system offered this in theory, but not in practice. The back-to-the-land movement of the 1930s and 1940s was testament enough to the overpowering desire of some urbanites to escape the congestion, adulteration (of food and the natural environment), unemployment, crime, and the unpleasant "rat race" of the city. But in rejecting the concentration of population in megalopolises, Borsodi denounced the American myth of progress associated with the system of mass production and a belief in bigness. This denunciation was central to his critique; furthermore, he believed that the ideology of mass society undergirded and caused the centralization of production, ownership, control, government, and ultimately, the

centralization of population itself in unmanageable megalopolises. The only escape from this ubiquitous threat was possible in country areas not already saddled with an "institutional burden."¹¹

Borsodi's conception of the relationship between the locale and the territory tilted the balance decidedly toward the small community, so much so that community became closely identified with the individual family homestead. He unreservedly accepted at least one tenet of the American creed--individualism. It was a modern update of the mythical frontier individualism where settlers helped each other out in projects too large for one family. Each family would link itself to its particular piece of land. The land, itself, in the form of small, private property holdings constituted Borsodi's utopianism. The land existed as a platform for comprehensive decentralization of production and consumption. In his view, semi-subsistence homesteads served as refuges from the innate inequalities and industrial dominance of the system of mass economic organization. Donald Davidson, one of the leading agrarians, called this approach "agrarianism for commuters." No matter what the name, Borsodi and his wife had demonstrated in the "Sevenacre" experiment, to their own satisfaction, how material and psychological safety and security could be achieved through self-reliance and working with nature on its own terms. Borsodi's decentralized rural homesteads were the keys to putting simple productive tools into the hands of average people yearning to escape the numbing, grinding, homogenizing reality of the city. "Decentralism" was a positive program for change because it challenged the control of productive machinery by giant industrial concerns in an attempt at redistribution of wealth. The homesteader could use the machine to reduce labor on the land and simultaneously undercut the manufacturing sector's monopoly on the means of production. The modern frontier version of utopian brotherhood would be fostered as production for use and not solely for profit reduced competition as a general social operating principle. Clearly, Borsodi envisioned a type of middle landscape halfway between megalopolis and wilderness. Workers would be freed to

lead more "rational existences" and would ". . . rediscover the religion of the hearth and begin to explore the possibilities of the rural community, the family group and the new American homestead."¹²

Borsodi saw access to an acreage (land) as the beginning, means, and the end of his utopian quest. Land provided a utopian beginning to urban refugees; it offered a place to break the bondage of industrial wage slavery. Land also supplied the means by which subsistence and a large degree of self-sufficiency could be attained. In Borsodi's notion of subsistence, the utopian principle of unity of mind and body, or the material and the spiritual, was evident. The production of food and fiber for direct home consumption constituted a direct link to the organic aspect of life and an economic "fall-back" position. Unemployment would no longer be a calamity because the land could provide sustenance. Finally, according to Borsodi, land was an end in itself because it tied humanity to nature and offered a potential opening to the spiritual dimension of life. Fulfillment, whether economic, spiritual, or socio-psychological, was immediate and evident in the interdependence of soil, plants, animals, and human beings. Borsodi's priorities were clear; the needs of the farm family should take precedence over the demands of any industry, and the current interests of people ought to be put ahead of agribusiness (large-scale, highly mechanized, commercial farming). "When we take the place in which we dwell away from the country, deprive ourselves of fresh air and sunlight, green grass and trees--we deprive ourselves of what is an elemental need of mankind; the inner discipline that comes from communion with the land."¹³

The environmental ideal that land was to be used as a sacred trust, not as a commodity, found an important place in Borsodi's thought. "Each generation of farmers consist of tenants for life only. It is impossible for any generation to speculate in land or to exhaust the soil entrusted to it without depriving its own children and all future inheritors of the earth of their birthrights." With this statement, Borsodi manifested a radical departure from the ideological status quo. Commodification of land for profit tended to sever the physical and

moral bonds which kept it whole and fecund. Caring for the land involved experimenting with its attributes to find the potential of each particular place. This concept agreed with the utopian characteristic of experimentation and a sort of conscious deviance from the dominant social paradigm. Borsodi criticized the methods of commercialized, industrial agriculture, and refused to push the organic capacity of his land in order to realize maximum production. As a way of life, "it is no more possible to treat agriculture as a business (without utter disregard of its intrinsic nature) than to treat art or religion in that manner."¹⁴

Problems in agriculture in Borsodi's view, largely stemmed from efforts then being made to commercialize, industrialize, and urbanize farming practices. Any new part-time farmers--in this case, homesteaders making at least part of their living from the land--needed to be aware of the problems of modern large-scale farming. He saw the system of land tenure as a perennially vexing problem. The high cost of land, driven by speculation and real estate development, made farming a difficult occupation to enter and also a difficult one to maintain from generation to generation. He summed up the real problem of agriculture this way: "How can this particular way of life absorb what modern science and invention have to contribute to enrich it without surrendering itself to modern commercialism and industrialism?" On this score, Borsodi and the Nashville Agrarians were in agreement. Donald Davidson praised *Agriculture in Modern Life* (1939) co-authored by O. E. Baker, Borsodi, and M. L. Wilson, and the 1938 Evanston conference, directed by Baker Brownell, out of which the book grew. Davidson stated the book's importance to all those loyal to agrarian-decentralist ideas, but added "it is even more important for the buoyant romanticists who have professed an interest in agriculture and yet have argued that the remedy for agricultural problems lies in relatively simple economic manipulations, undertaken by a leviathan government." He also approvingly noted the commonly accepted agrarian notion that "the farm population are the source of our actual vitality as a people;" urban-industrial populations simply did not reproduce themselves, and would ultimately collapse if rural

society was lost. Under these conditions, people would find the maintenance of community exceedingly problematic.¹⁵

Modern agricultural practice increasingly utilized what Borsodi called the "counting-house" approach, with its lists of yields, speeds of harvesting, weights, measures, and so on. He advocated the rejection of this method in favor of a more wholistic, synergistic relationship to life. Likewise, he opposed the commercial "profit and loss" perspective as being inappropriate for the small homesteader--people should "free themselves from total dependence on money making." The fatal flaw was not in people or the land so much as it was in modern life and what it had done to agriculture and the timelessness of cycles of organic growth. Borsodi's utopian ideal of a cooperative community of small freeholders predicted that involvement in natural organic cadences of living would teach people not to exploit the land and other people as well. "An organic home might conceivably be established by a group of individuals unrelated to each other. . . . What is absolutely essential is that those who undertake to establish . . . a home shall be individuals with like values." In this guise, the small community was envisaged as a large "family." The natural law of the land would then be synonymous with the utopian law of brotherhood.¹⁶

Despite Borsodi's insistent indictment of industrial techniques, he did not completely resist modern technology; instead he adopted what today we would call appropriate technology as his key link in making the rural homestead a viable productive option. He almost glorified the potential of electric motors and "mid-range" technology for freeing people from the drudgery of repetitive and tedious tasks. Electric power tools would enable the home manufacture of furniture and all manner of cheap, inexpensive tools, plus the amateur construction of outbuildings and even houses. In the kitchen, electric mixers and pressure cookers would speed production without compromising self-sufficiency or independence. "Only since the development of the internal combustion engine and of the

electric motor has a technique of domestic production been developed which makes it possible for the family to compete with the factory."¹⁷

The practical application of Borsodi's community theories began in Dayton, Ohio, in the summer of 1932. A local organization known as the Unit Committee of the Council of Social Agencies hired Borsodi as the director of the homesteads program designed to place urban unemployed on two-acre homesteads by families. Thirty-five to forty families constituted a colony or homestead unit. The ambitious plans called for fifty such homestead units to ring the city of Dayton within a fifteen mile radius. Each homestead unit retained ownership of the land and major community improvements such as roads and electric systems, and leased out the individual homesteads, on which the settlers would retain ownership of all improvements. Borsodi assumed that the settlers would lead semi-subsistence lifestyles replete with hen house, cow-shed, workshop, extensive gardens, orchard, berry patch, and craft and clothing equipment. They would supplement their home production by barter, sales of surplus produce and handicrafts, and part-time jobs. The Number One Unit secured a local bank loan, and construction proceeded after some initial delays. But the subsequent nine units could only make rapid progress by accepting federal help. By the spring of 1934, government-sponsored community projects around the country were federalized. Facing opposition from a number of influential Dayton institutions and the intrusion of the federal government into the direction of the whole project, Borsodi resigned his position. A year later the Dayton homestead experiment had gone bankrupt. Borsodi had seen the development as "a new frontier . . . to which the enterprising, industrious, and ambitious families shipwrecked in some way by the depression can migrate" like settlers in the past had migrated to new land and opportunities.¹⁸

It was obvious to even Borsodi that his authoritarian leadership had contributed to the problematic nature of the Dayton Homesteads program. In subsequent homestead projects he kept a lower profile, but never again worked with the federal government. Realizing that

any new community needed a stable financing arrangement, Borsodi established the Independence Foundation in 1935. It funneled bank loans and private contributions toward the purchase of land for homesteading development. Borsodi helped to found the most notable of these places, Bayard Lane and Van Houten Fields. Bayard Lane comprised seventeen homesteads on forty acres, near Suffern, New York, within easy commuting distance of New York City. Van Houten Fields had sixty-four homesteads located near West Nyack, in the same county as Bayard Lane (Rockland). These housing settlements became the main test cases of Borsodi's philosophy. As he declared: "the time has come for us to test everything having to do with economics by the criterion of its effects upon what is small but human." Of the two projects, Van Houten Fields was the more successful as a cooperative community, retaining an active and financially solvent community association well into the 1970s. The School of Living, located in Bayard Lane but technically not part of the community, taught the homesteaders spinning and weaving, cooking and canning, carpentry and masonry, and subsistence farming. Through the School, Borsodi promoted home-study programs to assist people in depressed areas help themselves find a better way of life. The School of Living enjoyed significant success hosting over 100 students in residence and 3,000 visitors per year in the late thirties and early forties. In later years, the School moved to Ohio and then to Freeland, Maryland, under the direction of Borsodi's disciple, Mildred Loomis, but never again displayed the effectiveness demonstrated in Suffern. Ultimately, the original School building and the "commuter homesteads" reverted to patterns of individual ownership. Ironically, the urban and suburban sprawl they originally sought to escape caught up and engulfed them, inflating their value to many times their original cost. While the cooperative device proved valuable to purchase land and to start buildings, roads, and set aside common green areas, its function can be seen as having been supplanted by private developers who fashioned multifarious suburban communities across the country. Over the

years, Borsodi's homestead communities became virtually indistinguishable from those surrounding suburbs, except for the quaint field-stone construction of the houses.¹⁹

Although Borsodi remained as an editor of the magazine Free America, a publication he had helped to start along with Herbert Agar, Chauncy Stillman, and others, he took on a more passive role in the development of homestead communities and he resigned as the director of the School of Living in 1941, to devote more time to his 700-page treatise on education and utopian homesteads, Education and Living (1948). Borsodi became convinced that the critical problem of modern humankind was an educational one, not mainly an economic or political one. Thus all his writings in the forties and after focused on education in the broadest sense. He believed that people had been mis-educated, which explained in part why they did not flock to his homestead projects. They saw the homestead communities as welfare programs or solutions to the housing problem, not as utopian human settlements. Adult re-education was the only way humankind could solve its mounting problems because it alone tended to safeguard the accumulated wisdom of the ages. "Centralization is fastening itself everywhere like a vise upon modern man, and in doing so is dragging down into the gutter the most precious values in the whole of mankind's cultural inheritance." Only "dedicated educators" were equipped to effectively save that inheritance. "It will not be saved by the financiers and big business men who are devoting themselves exclusively to the expansion of industry, nor by the planners, politicians and public officials who believe that the government should intervene in everything mankind does. Least of all by the socialists, communists and revolutionaries who believe that the totalitarian state is the answer to all the problems of mankind."²⁰

By the forties, Borsodi sought out additional intellectual anchors besides the land itself. He had adopted a pragmatic, yet essentially Nietzschean existentialism where those beat able to attune themselves to the natural rhythms of life were set free to express themselves and realize utopian leadership. But by substituting the power of education as the

agent of commonwealth realization, he rejoined the egalitarian ideological stream which runs through much of the utopian tradition. This tradition addressed communities as well, and Borsodi too, began to speak more directly to communities, and what made them "normal," that is, healthy and whole. Besides providing for various community experiences, "if it is neither too large nor too small in population and area; and if it fulfills all the functions which *it should, and does not take on or appropriate functions which it should not*, it is a *normal community*." In addition to those preconditions, Borsodi identified a number of fundamental characteristics of a community. First and foremost, a community must possess an identity in the form of a name. It must be a real place occupying time and space, and not just physical but cultural space too. That symbol gave it a unique recognizability and contributed to a feeling of rootedness. Two other characteristics were related to each other--land and people. Communities were known by their inhabitants and what they did with their environment. In addition, natural boundaries gave communities the basis of "real local autonomy." A center and a connected hinterland were equally important because "a population scattered about a countryside with no center and no institutions cannot be a normal community." It must also have a "body of customs" which get played out according to a set of "rules of etiquette" and mores. Communities must have leaders "whose influence or whose powers are such that they in fact initiate and direct the activities of the members of the community and the institutions essential to group and common action." Finally, communities must have a complete set of institutions and they must function to provide a civilized life for the inhabitants. "Most of the communities of America do not fulfill all these functions, and until they are normalized, the people of our rural regions and small towns will have to either migrate from them or commute to cities in order to find what they need and what is missing in their own communities."²¹

Borsodi believed the answer to what was missing in many communities could be provided by the leadership inherent in a new kind of educational institution. "Schools of

living or community universities" would organize "the potential leadership of communities . . . in such a manner that every individual and group in the community will think it natural to turn to the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of mankind." This development would tend to link groups in the community which normally did not interact, especially the professional and educated minority which "has no relationship to the community at large except insofar as it renders professional service for a price. . . . The establishment of Schools of Living would complete the circuit of systematic education from birth to death. . . . The local educated elite would thus become the resident extension staff of the university." This "reformation" in education would challenge the business and governmental leaders to do right by the "stewardship entrusted to them."²²

Borsodi realized, however, that such an evolutionary development would call into question the entire cultural system of America, and its underlying ideology as well. Each community would face enormous resistance to its changing direction through established and accepted social operational concepts: "[people] are to be socially as *urbanized* as the vast majority of modern city men and women; to be educationally and occupationally as *specialized*, and economically and politically as *centralized* and 'interdependent.'" These constituted the aspirations of most average people. Borsodi named this central ideology "Progress." "The essential fallacy of the prevailing ideology of the nature of Progress rests upon the fact that is all human life with which we have to be concerned--human life not only during periods of Progress but also during periods of regression." The history of human civilization demonstrated that advances were inevitably followed by declensions in cultural activity. Nevertheless, Borsodi believed that humankind could evade these Toynbeeian or Spenglerian civilizational collapses. Cultures could accomplish this end by avoiding wars, revolutions, and depressions. Humanity had reached a developmental point where such wisdom existed, if it only had the gumption to take it and apply it properly.²³

Communities could hasten this goal by establishing at the center of their collectives a school of living. The school would act to provide a focus for "a brotherhood united by a great ideal." That great ideal Borsodi identified as "normal living" in conjunction with a decentralized existence. Here he conceptualized the community as "a school—a group of people engaged in learning how to live." Much like Rousseau, Borsodi believed that people were at base born free, but everywhere were in chains, mainly through their own beliefs in the Cult of Progress. Once the schools of living were established, they would conduct "perpetual surveys" of their respective communities to measure their progress toward "rational living." Such surveys could take the form of large wall maps of the locale, which would record the ownership of land and its use or abuse. When problems were exposed, people would put together a community plan with the assistance of the equivalent of today's community college. All planning would become community planning; "city planning ought to be directed to transferring city activities and city populations . . . to the country and into the smaller towns of the nation. . . . Our cities do not need preservation; what they need is abolition."²⁴

This whole process could be speeded up, according to Borsodi, by dynamic individuals "establishing productive homes and homesteads in communities small enough for normalization." If they were largely independent from the money economy, they could then devote the bulk of their time to study and the re-education of the local population. He believed these people should see this as a necessary obligation because "At every moment of history, at every place on earth--in the smallest communities as in the capitals of the greatest of nations--mankind not only needs leadership, *it follows leadership of some kind.*" [Italics Borsodi's] Those leaders should logically be the ones most equipped for the job--teachers. Seeing himself as one such teacher, Borsodi toured the country in 1949, staying with friends; he ultimately visited Melbourne Village, an intentional community in Florida started by three of his followers--Virginia Wood, Elizabeth Nutting, and Margaret Hutchinson--from his days

in the Dayton Subsistence Homesteads experiments. As initially a homesteading community, Melbourne Village was only slightly successful in bringing about his distributist and decentralist dream, even though he took up residence there in 1950 and played an active part in the governance and cultural life of the community, by being active in both the local school of living and the homestead association.²⁵

As Borsodi grew older, it was no longer so much the modern homestead which would be the agent of enlightened change, but the special school, a school dedicated to teaching the art of living for old and young alike. Was Borsodi a prophet of utopian living based on community-linked homesteads and schools of living, or was he an antimodernist who retreated to escapist suburban homesteads as historian Paul Conkin argued? That Borsodi resisted the flow of history was not in doubt; but, would an antimodernist accept so much of modern science and technology and avow the need for so much change? Although decentralization was something of a popular, even trendy concept in some mainstream circles, in Borsodi's hands it not only became an alternative to the liberal welfare state and the increasing emphasis on the territory at the expense of the locale, but perhaps graduated to the status of a positive threat to the entire established order, as most good utopias do, according to sociologist Karl Mannheim. At least to one of the New Deal's chief planners, Rexford Tugwell, the alternative posed by Borsodi and the agrarian movement was worthy of a serious riposte: it was nothing more than a "literary romp, got up by sentimentalists who hadn't any idea what they were talking about." The age was one of great and big plans, or could be, and small communities, although important, needed to mind their place--in support of the great society.²⁶

Whereas Borsodi's caustic criticisms of the order of things came from a kind of communitarian gadfly, unattached to any "mainstream" institution, similarly scathing assessments issued forth from the heart of academia in the person of professor of contemporary thought at Northwestern University, Baker Brownell (1887-1965). A native

Illinoisan, he brought to the above institution a varied career, having been at times a reporter, English teacher, soldier in World War I, and editorial writer for the Chicago Daily News. He served at Northwestern in the department of journalism, and lastly, as professor of philosophy from 1947-1953. He also numbered among his credits advisor to the United States Department of Agriculture from 1936-1939 and supervising editor for Harper & Brothers on a series of books conceptualized to bring together fields of specialized knowledge and apply them to central problems of American life during the 1940s. He became the most widely known for his work in the field of community studies, including the Montana Study and the regional project in Southern Illinois.²⁷

Whether it was due to his engaging personality or a somewhat eclectic philosophy and methodological tolerance, Brownell traveled in a wide circle of alternative and small community proponents. Whereas Borsodi's dogmatism kept many of these people at arms length, intellectually speaking, Brownell embraced widely differing theoretical positions on the small community. His connections and correspondence included New Dealers like Tugwell and M. L. Wilson, Southern Agrarians like John Ransom Crowe, Allen Tate, and Davidson, decentralists such as Agar and Borsodi, social scientists like Richard Ely and O. E. Baker, and fellow utopians Arthur Morgan and Frank Lloyd Wright. As part of his course in contemporary thought, Brownell invited a steady stream of experts to speak in fields which touched on all aspects of human knowledge. He believed that the general college curriculum as well as modern life had become fragmented, without a unifying core; his course attempted to integrate that segmented condition by showing how a liberal arts education could apply directly and with a foundation common to the larger world of seemingly disparate events in politics, science, and business. These activities were all constituents of the "human community," which he feared was falling apart because of philosophies and approaches to life which compartmentalized and fractionalized an otherwise whole experience and structure. Part of this disintegration included the demise of the small community, and

Brownell was convinced that a unified educational experience would slow and perhaps reverse that centrifugal effect.²⁸

In his interest in education he paralleled Borsodi's later emphasis on the power of continual adult renewal through schools of living to remake the community as the fountainhead of modern civilization. In fact, they thought well enough of each other for Brownell to accept Borsodi's invitation to become a trustee of the School of Living, along with Ligutti, Pickett, Stillman, and others. Brownell also supported without hesitation the basic positions of the School, which questioned and challenged the validity of: "the metropolitan city; factory or mass production of food, fuel, clothing and most of the needs and desires of life; tenancy and absentee ownership of real property; centralization of economic controls in governmental bureaucracies and finance-capitalist corporations; separation of education from living experience; and reliance on a mechanistic and materialistic interpretation of the problems of society." But where Borsodi emphasized the distributist and individualist aspects of life, Brownell concentrated on the dynamics of common life experiences realized in the community.²⁹

Yet he was sympathetic to the aims of the distributists and decentralists. To that end, Brownell in 1936 called for a conference of "people interested in a system of integrated production and consumption or a distributive society." He was so interested in those ideas that he declared his intention to devote his entire *Contemporary Thought* course in 1936 to it, feeling it was of "great importance and urgency." Its aim would not be to "evangelize," but to explore the possibility of integrating distributive ideas into the ongoing society. Thus, like Borsodi, Brownell was not so much a revolutionary as an evolutionary thinker. No great changes were needed immediately, but cumulative great changes would be necessary for American society to survive and prosper. Even somewhat reactionary small community enthusiasts such as the Southern Regionalists (as Brownell called them) were part of the movement and should not be dismissed lightly. In chastising John Chamberlain of the New

Republic for not giving the Southern Agrarians enough credit, Brownell declared that they contributed valuable insights in cultural regionalism and that their particular slant "is all part of the same thing." Although he did not share the fascistic tendencies which swirled around them and some of their supporters, he agreed with Borsodi that unity of all the various small community approaches would be necessary for the emergence of a national distributist movement.³⁰

All involved realized that financing such an organization would be a difficult challenge, especially during the war years. Even the School of Living experienced budgetary problems in 1941, so Borsodi called on his fellow trustees for help. Brownell suggested that the School get financial support from the churches, both Catholic and Protestant. Ligutti countered that churches could not take on much more monetary burden. In addition, Brownell pointed out potential problems other than financial with the School. He questioned how the quality of publications and the work of the School itself would be maintained with Borsodi no longer running it. Additionally, all the board members wondered about the direction its philosophy would take in Borsodi's absence. They worried about being identified with "Gandhiism." The board urged Borsodi and the School to put forward an active vision of culture, a realistic alternative to the dominant centralized one which was "driving the world insane." Brownell further advised that in such a vision both practice and teaching were necessary components for a new reformation.³¹

Brownell pressed for a new arrangement of the ways in which Americans went about the practice of constructing their culture. This was necessary because "An underlying conflict of method corrupts the modern era. On the one hand is the culture of specialism; on the other hand is the human community. Each is a kind of living, a way of doing things. . . . Today these methods are becoming more and more divergent. They would seem to be incompatible, and the former is displacing the latter." He lamented the fact that people--especially professionals like artists, engineers, teachers, and businesspeople--progressively

reduced life to more and more bits and pieces but seldom rebuilt them. Things came apart easily enough, but were put back together with great difficulty. Analytical and "term-creating ways of thought" were not adequate by themselves to service a great culture properly. As community declined, positive change became more difficult to achieve, and "without the community even specialism cannot survive." America's survival as a culture was at stake; people would have to pay a price, and the cost would be higher if the community became extinct. The decline of the community played a bigger role in the "modern complex of disaster" than even the Cold War or atomic weapons.³²

As a philosopher, it was natural for Brownell to construct a well-developed theory of the small community. He classified his own philosophy as one of "naturalistic mysticism," which clearly set him apart from the usual materialists, idealists, pragmatists, and existentialists. Later observers of his intellectual position continued to stress his naturalistic theory of life, but in terms of its ecological conditions, especially related to the physical environment. But Brownell went to great lengths to keep his intuitionism from skidding into spiritualism or cosmic ineffableness. He emphasized the requirements of corporeal life and the rightful place of human beings in nature, which grounded experience in a reality which was coextensive with Nature, and described at times by culture, science, history, and philosophy, but never totally explained or comprehended by them. The problem with science and most discursive thought was that it was not direct and immediate experience. Science was a process, like life itself, but bound to a single instance and unable to transfer the experience of concrete situations to its quest for universals. Real being was completely found in the "integrative moment of living," not in the parade of symbols commonly taken for human life. Reality for human beings was generated in the interdependency of organism and its environment. People acquired knowledge naturally as a matter of existence. Some of that knowledge was translated into symbols, quite necessary for the construction of cultural life, but productive of an epistemological dichotomy between direct experience and symbolic

understanding. For Brownell, self-realization (the highest achievement of the quest for knowledge) occurred in a naturalistic Gestalt unifying both figure and ground; science described the particulars while intuitionism revealed the background of life. One of the structures which provided order in Nature was the community, which unified the individual and the group. The pattern of human life, including the community, "has been laid out through millions of years in association with living animals and plants and the vast music and movement of the natural world." *Populations of beings knew no way other than in communities to partake in the great order of Nature. "To abstract human beings by some technological procedure from this functional relationship with the life and creative persistence of the natural world around them would be literally to abstract them from life itself."*³³

To Brownell, rural life best exemplified the cooperative alliance with Nature; it demonstrated the symbiotic nature of all life. Thus, it was the best seat for the small community, the only true community, in Brownell's view. In addition, history was on the side of the rural community, for it had been the home of human culture for millenia. Rural culture showed continuity and perseverance; it had cultural reserves to draw on in hard times and manifested resiliency in the face of famine, pestilence, and war. "Cities have come and gone. Their cultures and philosophies have been epiphenomenal, as it were, upon the deep permanence of their rural background. But the human community as a sustaining, many-functioned, organic pattern of life has rarely, if ever, been in them. . . . It belongs to rural culture, philosophy, and life."³⁴

Utopian communitarians like other social critics recognized that the small community and rural society was being swept aside not just by the ideas of mass society, but its technology and edifices too. Early on in the career of mass society, and like Borsodi, Brownell also spotted both the potential and the threat of the machine, industrial production, and the fixation with power and growth to the health of the small community. "Where the

machine, on which this world is riding, is about to go no one can say." Well before Mumford's change of heart about technology in forties, Brownell saw that it too was a causal factor, seemingly with a mind of its own. "It will have its natural movement in the future as in the past, and its course will be directed partly by the iron evolution of its own nature, partly by the needs and habits of the men who live on it. It may ruin; it may save society." Writing in The New Universe (1926) before the orgy of dam building in the thirties, but amidst the advent of the skyscraper and large corporate organizations which were themselves based partly on their ability to channel large amounts of power, both in terms of physical energy and socio-economic energy, Brownell pointed to the corrupting capacity of power to do the bidding of a large-scale business-oriented society. "For power man must have in even greater ratios if he will hold his grip on life and natural things; but power in pools of legalized control, in all engrossing concentrates of private property and privilege may well be poisonous to the human race."³⁵

By the 1930s, the power age had replaced the machine age according to Brownell, and that entailed new challenges to the small community. In Architecture and Modern Life (1937), co-authored with Frank Lloyd Wright, Brownell worried about the increasing rate of cultural change that the ability to wield tremendous power, symbolized by the Norris dam or a huge modern battleship, and a growing commitment to use it could bring. "Power is the ability not to congeal reality in everlasting molds, but to speed it up in the wild rhythms of moving things." Society had changed fundamentally through chronic seduction by power and what it offered; Brownell called it a "horizontal" society. "This billion horse-power America is not the old America intensified by added power. It is a new society." Individual lives had become pluralistic, external, explicit, and characterized by action which was "specialized with sharp cleavage between productive activities and consuming activities in contrast to the integrity of life of our fathers." Human beings counted for less and less, and communities built on that human factor as being primary in the deliberations of society were

fading fast. "If the efficiency of the system requires more machine activity and less human activity, there will be more machine activity. In such a society the citizens, so to speak, are the producers of activity whether they be men or machines." The maintenance of power production and distribution through huge social organizations took precedence above all else. Large scale operations had a logic all their own; they demanded technical and social efficiency of "operation which can be relatively indifferent to personal interests and integrity." Brownell went Borsodi one better here: in addition to the economic insecurity and psychological costs of modern industrial society, people were gradually losing the cultural habit and ability to see their interests as human beings first and foremost ahead of the needs of their material, but non-living creations. Peoples' lives had become "horizontal" because their duties were spread over unrelated areas of activities. "A modern man's responsibilities are usually subdivided. They have no integrating principle. No person knows him all through. . . . Because of these things the sense of responsibility declines. . . . In any case there is less rigorous pride in personal honor. Persons trust more in organization--fools though they may be--and less in persons. And they themselves are less trustworthy." Brownell adamantly claimed that this description was the city and its organizations. Urban areas congenitally suffered from "fragmentation of experience, the dispersion of personal life, the pluralism of personality . . . , [and] the entire ideology of the modern person's life" was permeated by pluralisms; "it is thoroughgoing." In terms of architecture, "in such a world no building can house a life, nor can one god sanctify it. Structural continuity is not there. Living is not coherent." Civilization devoted to power created great and tremendous cities, and these demonstrated anew the potent strains of ambivalence pervading American society. They were both "orderly and disorderly, beautiful and hideous, constructive and destructive." What would be the fate of small communities under such conditions?³⁶

Through his critique of machine technology, organizational centralization, specialized functions carried out on large scales, and the bifurcation of production and consumption,

Brownell joined the ranks of the debate over mass society. Fragmentation of culture at the top filtered down to individual psyches which found themselves responding to an "aggregate of specialized compulsions." Modern society called this freedom, but Brownell called it escape. Endless details and events substituted for the natural unity of experience. The basic dimensions of life such as work, family, home, and voluntary associations became segmented, specialized, ill-fitting functions. Mass society, in short, was a place of sterility, lostness, and spiritual incoherence. Mass society, as characterized by urban life, "is designed always to subordinate this moment to the next one. . . . It roars on toward endless futures which it never finds. It tips and staggers endlessly into postponed values that never are realized. . . . Or they make way briefly for corrupted consummations and pleasure seekings that have no element of production. This segregation of instrument from end is the secret both of the city's power and its human failure." Brownell also accused sociologists, namely Louis Wirth for one, of aiding in the rise of the mass state. He characterized Wirth as advocating competition on a national scale of mass organizations based on ethnic, racial, and economic differences. Regulated by the federal government, this pluralistic activity would, through the supposedly ameliorative nature of competition, contribute decisively toward the "fulfillment of our mass democracy." Naturally, Brownell found this idea fallacious and decidedly anti-small community. "It exhibits the provincialism conventionally attributed to rural people, and an indifference to ways of life held precious by millions of Americans. . . . It substitutes for it a kind of class and race war under regulations that will favor certain kinds of aggressive competition but restrict other kinds."³⁷

Like power and production, the modern world was obsessed with urbanism. Cities destroyed human nature because they were acquisitive, selfish, and impersonal—prime breeding grounds for aggressiveness. "The personal give and take, the mutuality of living, are replaced by power." Cities took on an imperialist stance toward the countryside, sucking out their population, money, trade, and close associations. Mass entertainment and

technological progress did not adequately compensate rural areas for their contribution to national society. Thus, urban areas acted like parasites on the countryside. Still, they could not achieve success. "The notorious crime rates, the terrifying increase in juvenile delinquency, insanity, neuroses, the personal and social disintegration, the excessive rates of drunkenness, suicide, divorce, and abortion are primarily urban in origin or correlated with the increasing urbanization of life." As primarily a predator, the city expanded at the expense of the rural regions. Brownell saw this as neither desirable or inevitable; it was premature to declare the rural community dead and gone as had sociologist Walter Kollmorgen. The rural community had suffered a "critical decline," and society should not turn away from the truth about the role of "modern forces" in such a demise.³⁸

Most of the forces active in the downward slide of the community were visible, but what exactly was the community that it should be thought of as being so fundamental to society and close to Nature? Brownell gave a covering definition, a generic description: "A community is a group of people who know one another well." Obviously, however, that definition only worked when the latter part of it meant involvement in the full range of "functional and social relationships" which people normally have with each other. In The Human Community (1950), Brownell laid out an extended definition of the community in five essential characteristics. First, "a community is a group of neighbors who know one another face to face." He realized that linking the community to primary groups was controversial, but he believed that this trait accounted for much of the ease of action and cohesiveness of real communities. But communities were more than just kin groups; so the definition was enlarged to include unrelated people who "may and do 'run across' each other with familiarity and without surprise." Being in close proximity, or in the general vicinity, of people who one would likely interact with on a frequent basis required people to take account of each other and see them more for who they were. The trend in modern life, of course, was to seek relief from this intensity by "losing oneself" in impersonal places.

Brownell saw this as a shirking of responsibility and taking the easy way out, a route full of serious consequences for society. "When escape, thrill, explosive discontinuity of experience, or irresponsible power and capture become the prevailing mode, we may be sure that human control over our destinies is weakening and that society is breaking down. The hot searching always for new futures and new worlds to conquer is at best time-driven slavery." The quest for salvation in "novel scenes, sudden changes, and rootless gayety" were all "specialized compulsions" which really led away from people and social accountability.³⁹

Second, the community was "a diversified group in age, sex, skill, function, and mutual service to each other." The complete community possessed a range of socially obvious differences, not for the sake of diversity, but so that the differences could complement and balance one another. These variations helped people to have and experience what they themselves could not create, produce, or purchase. Older people brought their skills and life experience to the community matrix to be shared with younger people who, although they lacked familiarity with life, contributed boundless energy and idealism to the group. In a way, such a view celebrated mutuality itself, and assumed social connectedness, rather than social atomism. "The living community has inner diversification in which spontaneous groupings can arise. It has also stability enough to assure persistence of these groups."⁴⁰

Third, the community was a "cooperative group, in which many of the main activities of life are carried on together." The basic social structure served to include people in the most important aspects of life. Much of cooperativeness of communities arose out of their place-specific nature. The locale tended by itself to focus people toward common experiences. Most, but not all, cultural activities were supported by such communities, such as civic, economic, family, educational, religious, and recreational processes. "To each member of the community they are clearly part of the going process over which he has some measure of influence. . . . The coherence of functions in the true community is appreciatively

clear to each member as well as rationally demonstrable. It is close in his experience. He belongs."⁴¹

Fourth, the community is a "group having a sense of 'belonging' or group identity and solidarity." This characteristic spoke to the spiritual nature of the community. People willingly saw themselves in the community and the community in themselves. Such words as morale, loyalty, and pride described it, and it "may be symbolized by mottoes, songs, flags, badges, sacred rites, or gods." Such a community deliberately evaluated itself and its values in common. In fact, the prime motivation was inclusion in such a process, not exclusion or escape. Such a state of being found extreme individualism problematic. "It is devotion, not detachment, and seeks not emotional security and untouched poise above the flood and flux, but generous abandon, loyalty, and love in fellow men."⁴²

Finally, the "community is a rather small group, such as the family or small town, in which each person can know a number of others as whole persons, not as functional fragments. When the group under consideration is so large that the people in it do not know one another, the community disappears." The ideal size could range from 100 to 10,000 people, depending on the circumstances. Brownell spoke of the community as an organism, at least in its terms of its size and relationship with its environment. Too large a community meant more people, things, and area than people could realistically and practically comprehend in a directly cooperative way. Excessive size in nature meant organismic or environmental breakdown; it was the same for human communities. "A system built, not on the human measure, but indefinitely expansible, approaches the point of self-destruction. It is built without reference to the native pattern of limited functions and communal activities that is man." But Brownell was no simple, reactionary anti-modernist who was all absolutes and no exceptions. Some specialization and secondary groups were likely in almost any setting, and not necessarily damaging to the utopian promise of the small community. "Though it must be granted, of course, that some degree of this remote and indirect

relationship is inevitable and indeed desirable in a modern culture, it by no means follows that it should replace the immediacy and the multifunctional contacts of men with one another in a true community." Humans could not escape from each other; living together was their natural state.⁴³

For Americans, the problems of the world loomed larger after World War II, and the existence of the United Nations tended to focus more attention on problems of the community in terms of villages, in which a majority of the earth's population lived. Brownell applauded such efforts, especially a conference sponsored by the United Nations called "Problems of the Village" held in 1947. He expressed concern that the term "village" not be construed too narrowly or too inclusively. For example, he suggested that the term include any small community like the open country place. In addition, all areas of knowledge could contribute successfully to expansion of community understanding. That was true because "The central problem of the conference . . .--and for that matter of the modern world--is the human community, its survival, its stabilization, its enrichment as a basic pattern of human living." Yet, many social scientists and policy experts tended to extend and inflate the term "community" so that it could include almost any "group subject to classification, up to and including the so-called world community." This situation exemplified "our modern confusion of values," because such language contributed to a decline in understanding of the real community, and helped to replace it by "vaguely generalized pseudo-communities."⁴⁴

Critics, of course, did not take Brownell's advocacy of the small community or village at face value. At the Eighth Symposium, The Conference on Science, Philosophy and Religion held in 1948, one such questioner took Brownell to task for claiming that the small community was automatically utopian in nature, while the city was necessarily evil and always destructive of whole human beings. Professor Henry N. Wiernan pointed out that some rural community people do not know each other very well because they "do not respond to one another with diversified sensitivity. A shell forms about each individual, a

shell of torpor, routine, and custom, allowing one to respond only to those matters which the tradition of that community has decreed are worth consideration." So he likened village people to turtles keeping their heads tucked away most of the time, coming out only for a narrow range of interaction. The real problem, Wieman proclaimed, was not the maintenance and revitalization of the small community, but the discovery (he alluded to science aiding in this quest) of the process of "creative transformation whereby the significant context [of human interaction] grows in range, complexity, and richness." Such a liberation from isolation, parochialism, and dead tradition could take place in urban areas too. Brownell responded that our picture of the potential of the healthy community to foster such free social interactions was warped by fact that there were very few of these healthy, intact communities to use as models. He posited such a lack due to the draining out of talent, energy, and optimistic attitudes from rural to urban places. Again, the fault was not inherent in small communities, but one imposed on them from the outside like a conquered province. Furthermore, Brownell seriously doubted whether more than a small minority, mainly intellectuals, performers, or leaders of one kind or another, could attain Wieman's wide and engaging significant social context. "It may be doubted whether the members of this specialized, segregated group perform their function better or live better than do the small-town lawyer, editor, pastor, school superintendent, or the intelligent physician, farmer, builder, rural surveyor, or engineer."⁴⁵

Brownell's plan for reviving the small community went well beyond simply minimizing urban interference. He liked to think of himself as an agrarian; he cheered the efforts of the "One foot on the soil" philosophy which pushed the idea of part-time factory employment in decentralized plants and part-time agricultural work on one's own land. Although he agreed that some industrial functions were best left centralized, he proposed that newer technologies and businesses could be easily and profitably decentralized, and might also be more efficient. Thus he called for differential decentralization: centralize industries

where absolutely necessary, but decentralize most others. He pointed to the example set by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in this regard. And of course, as originally designed by Arthur Morgan, the TVA would have been a mixture of centralized and decentralized facilities and processes. The main power-generating dams, flood control and navigation devices, and fertilizer plants constituted the centralized facilities, while tributary dams, soil and forestry projects, recreation, farm demonstrations, community extension services, and rural health programs were conceived as decentralized operations. Brownell admired the TVA for its insistence, at least originally, to defer on some local matters to the decisions of local people. He cheered the persuasion-by-example method of the demonstration farms. But by the 1950s, even some supporters of TVA no longer saw the idealism of democratic decentralism as working out well in practice. Concentrated financial and bureaucratic power in large institutions like the TVA itself seemed to give lie to its original utopianism. One reviewer of The Human Community charged that Brownell fell "prey to a mechanistic conception of the relation between centralization and decentralization." His identification of big industry with big cities, and decentralization of plant with decentralization of settlement was not proved by TVA; in fact, it may have been contradicted by it.⁴⁶

Technology and socio-economic systems, however, were only part of the problem of the small community. They were among the more visible of the "lethal factors in Western Culture." Brownell pointed to a less obvious, but even more threatening factor in terms of a "method of organizing experience and behavior." He called this "linear," and presumably it characterized the modes of thought found in science, engineering, the factory method, and professional specialization. So he said, but he never really defined exactly what it was. Nevertheless, it enervated the community and corrupted the quest for salvation by converting it into the marketplace activities of window shopping and price dickering on the showroom floor. "The lethal factors of our civilization are the excesses. . . . The extreme development of a method vastly extensive in range, massive and all-inclusive, overrides human limits;

crushes out the more intimate integrity of the human community. . . . In effect men abandon their survival." Part of the problem was in the comparison of the small community to the large, because the strengths of little places like stability and the "ordered rhythm of rural life" paled in the contrast with the sheer power, talent, and specialties of big places. But the "professional virtuositities" of all cultural fields "build up a clamoring world around us of substitutive and vicarious life. . . . In their welter of highly segregated functions and the anonymous, scattered bits of human endeavor they dissipate the community or leave it only an abstract shell."⁴⁷

In The Human Community, Brownell not only criticized those forces which undermined the small community, but basically launched a scathing, all-out attack on mass society. For the most part, every major institution in America came under some sort of assault, and he expected many hostile reviews, especially from sociologists. Not surprisingly, he got them. One reviewer of sociological background began: "Social scientists who may be attracted by the title of this volume are bound to be disappointed, for it adds virtually nothing to an objective understanding of the human community." Another objected that Brownell "has written what might have become a very significant book, but instead turned into a very scurrilous one." A third complained that Brownell's analysis of the community might not be of much help, since he ignored the chief source of trouble--the conflict between "tradition" and "science." The most energetic and wide-ranging attack came from historian Oscar Handlin. He objected to it on the grounds of "repeated errors of fact, the arbitrary definitions, and the unfounded dichotomies between city and country: city-bad, country--good." But Handlin inferred, wrongly I think, that Brownell wanted to revert to pre-industrial villages. This judgment colored his whole view of Brownell's message, so Handlin was then almost obliged to declare that the book went "against the fact of history." Not only that but "through the volume runs a deep strain of obscurantism, a dislike of urban uprooted intellectuals, of current educational methods, of pure scholarship." He derided

Brownell's concern over "outsiders" coming into small communities. His harsh review concluded by referring to Brownell's views as "hardly the attitudes for a time of crisis." Apparently, extremism in the service of utopia was a vice. Only the converted, or nearly so, had few or no reservations. Community activist Richard Poston gushed approvingly: "Here we have the full union of poetry and science fused in all the humble beauty of literary style that can be captured by a master artisan."⁴⁸

Although he wrote a number of books after The Human Community, only one, The College and the Community (1952), added to his theory of the small community. He fashioned this book as a forceful critique of higher education. Conventional higher education had failed the nation and its people. The time had come to take education to the people in their communities. His solution paralleled Borsodi's idea of folk schools or community colleges. Educational institutions would serve communities themselves, rather than individuals. Brownell used as his model the community study groups he and the Montana Study project implemented during the forties. "Education in little places . . . is a philosophy . . . that involves a vision of new techniques and instruments, and a respect for the little place. It is a love of human beings in their communities, and a belief above all in their importance."⁴⁹

The above quotation demonstrated Brownell's commitment to education not only as symbolic awareness, but understanding gained through action, or praxis. He confirmed that belief in a letter to fellow utopian Arthur Morgan in 1952, saying that although his Contemporary Thought class did some "integrative work," he "realized that there could be no intellectual integrity in terms of a synthesis of subject matter alone." That was why he decided on the small community as the central organizing principle of his philosophy. True communities demonstrated the union of theory and practice in their spontaneous everyday activities, not just in planned, scripted gatherings or intellectual discussion. As an engineer, Arthur E. Morgan also appreciated the action component of community life, and dedicated a

large part of his life to its exploration. As one of the three most recognized and influential utopian small communitarians in the war and immediate post-war period, Morgan accepted much of Borsodi's and Brownell's critique of mass society; especially that the sacrosanct position of the small community had been severely compromised to the point of near total eclipse by urban and urban-linked agglomerations. In dramatizing this point, however, he took a different approach from the others: whereas Borsodi emphasized the social and the psychological aspects, and Brownell highlighted the biological and philosophical factors, Morgan developed the ethical and economic dimensions of community experience the most. "Without fairly definite standards society will disintegrate. The small community is the best place, almost the only place, for stabilizing and transmitting the finest of those ethical standards which concern the intimate relations of its members." "It should plan its economic life, and not just drift with circumstance."⁵⁰

Morgan began his search for the answers to human progress as a surveyor in Minnesota. He later became a self-taught engineer, and entered the largely open field of flood control engineering. He gained national recognition for his work on the Miami River flood control structures in Dayton, Ohio, in 1913. As president of his own engineering firm, he traveled widely and worked on a large variety of water-related projects. In 1920, he was appointed president of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he put into place an educational structure of alternating study and work known as the Antioch Plan. President Roosevelt appointed him to the chairmanship of the Tennessee Valley Authority in 1933. He was subsequently removed as chairman in 1938, and retired to private life, where he established Community Service, Inc., in 1940. From then until his death in 1975, he worked to collect, research, and disseminate information on the problems and potential of the small community. He maintained that he had been interested in the desultory course of human progress from an early point in his life, and wondered why humans kept making the same social mistakes throughout history. He asked: "What are the keys to the direction of those

influences which would lead to the fulfillment of the possibilities of human life? No matter what I did, that question remained near the forefront of my mind, and so my varied experiences became data to be used in trying to answer that question."⁵¹

Morgan's interest in the small community was well known by the mid-1930s. Brownell, as the editor of series of books on modern social problems and their relation to the small community, had contacted him about co-authoring a book on agriculture and technology with Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace. Morgan declined, but expressed a desire to pursue the project after their government services were finished. Brownell also inquired as to any plans in the Tennessee Valley for higher educational classes on "social implications in the great TVA plan" and to help people live in the kind of society envisioned by Arthur Morgan's TVA ideals. Brownell indicated he would participate in such an undertaking--"a kind of Antioch for the Tennessee Valley." Morgan responded that if he were young, he would start such a program or school; however, some of his friends were talking about one. As the end of the decade approached, both Brownell and Morgan began to notice a *diminution in the amount of attention directed toward the community point of view*. They agreed that the other's ideas on the community were similar to their own, and therefore they should vigorously promulgate their views. Brownell then offered to write a book with Morgan on community, which would shunt technology into the background. They never wrote the book, but did establish something of a mutual admiration society which continued throughout their lives.⁵²

The three utopian small communitarians analyzed in this study all portrayed the situation of the small community as critical, and in markedly similar terms. One of their subtle differences, however, centered on the source of the small community's difficulties. Whereas Borsodi saw the main enemy as the factory system and mass production, Brownell identified it as the entire urban-industrial complex, with its attendant extreme specialization. Morgan went even deeper into the marrow of human civilization, and pointed to a basic

failure of Western culture to keep alive a world view integrative of the utopian potential of the small community. "The greatest lack of the American community is not a lack of leadership, but rather lack of vision of what the community might be. We need to see the small community as the unit of society, the reservoir of fundamental human culture, the agency which, directly or indirectly sets the basic cultural pattern for the nation, as the chief source of population of our cities." Society could make no real, sustained progress as long as a crucial part was missing from the cultural equation. The fate of the village, the city, and the nation were inextricably linked--the destiny of one was the destiny of all.⁵³

In their own ways, the utopian communitarians all opposed the development of mass society. They saw it as an aberration from the course of history. Isolated dwellings were the exception to the rule of small communal settlements throughout human existence. For only a short period of that history had cities existed, and most of them were not much more than towns. For Morgan, the village was the dominant reality in human civilization. But, "In modern times the small community has played the part of an orphan in an unfriendly world. It has been despised, neglected, exploited, and robbed. The cities have skimmed off the cream of its young population." Morgan implied that a great part of the techniques of living developed in small communities was being rapidly lost, with seriously detrimental consequences for humanity. "The small community has supplied the lifeblood of civilization, and neglect of it has been one of the primary reasons for the slowness and the interrupted course of human progress."⁵⁴

Even in the best of times, Morgan noted, progress could never be realized in a straight line upwards. Setbacks, recessions, regressions, and failures were all a natural part of the fabric of human life. If the doctrine of "survival of the fittest" applied to something in the social realm, it meant "only that what survives is that which is fittest under the particular existing circumstances." Neither Marxian materialism nor Hegelian idealism underlaid historical change. Both change and continuity arose out of a primeval ethical or moral

"understanding" developed in the small community. "The roots of civilization are elemental traits--good will, neighborliness, fair play, courage, tolerance, open-minded inquiry, patience. A people rich in these qualities will develop a great civilization, with great art, science, industry, government." In a way, Morgan saw human collective reality as a battleground between the forces of ignorance, darkness, and devolution, and the forces of wisdom, enlightenment, and evolution. "If the basic qualities fade, then no matter how great the wealth, how brilliant the learning, how polished the culture, that civilization will crumble."⁵⁵

Causal factors in the development of civilization rested on these basic traits, which in turn, were based on the quality of nurturance in early childhood. Like Piaget, Morgan was impressed with the power of early experiences in molding the human personality. He relegated genetic inheritance and adult socialization to very minor roles in this process. The most sublime traits of humanity were "learned in the intimate, friendly world of the family and the small community, usually by the age of ten or twelve, and by unconscious imitation, as we learn the mother tongue." But the family or other mutualistic groups needed help in properly training the young in the ways of the healthy culture. "Unless supported by the surrounding community, the single family is too small a unit to maintain fine standards." True cultural innovation usually took place over long periods of time by means of incremental progress in the cultural inheritance handed down from generation to generation. "If the social threads of community, by which they are preserved and transmitted, should be broken, equally long periods might be necessary to re-create them."⁵⁶

The small community was necessary for the maintenance and advance of civilization, but Morgan never brought himself to term it a sufficient condition. Often he referred to it as a fallback position, from which a fragmented culture could rebuild itself. "Should there be a breakdown in the present social order, the small community is the seed bed from which a new order would have to grow. Whoever increases the excellence and stability of small

communities sets limits to social retrogression." Morgan admitted that the small community was changing, and that the old style of community which tried to dominate its members' lives through tradition was coming to an end. But that transformation simply opened new vistas on both individual and collective freedoms. Writing in 1942, he stated that "If we use the present time of social and economic transition as an opportunity, the disappearance of the old community need be no disaster." But "there [was] little time to lose," because "this progressive disappearance of the community . . . constitutes an historic crisis."⁵⁷

The modern small community would seek a new balance between localism and territorialism. It would provide the sense of belongingness and common purpose lacking in much of the life of mass society, but also allow its citizens the opportunity to explore mutualistic connections with a wide variety of other institutions, some of a mass nature, including the national government. "While co-operating heartily with various federal agencies, it will firmly maintain its individuality and autonomy, and will not be swallowed up in grasping, characterless uniformity of far-flung, centralized government bureaucracy." New small communities would resist encroachments by mass society, by eliminating the "narrowness and provincialism of the old village," and becoming "clearinghouses for the exchange of ideas and experience." They would become models of reason, practicality, efficiency, and morality, embracing the modern world, not shrinking from it. Morgan as a progressive, believed that the small community could be engineered, and that its importance to civilization required an effort at least equal to, if not greater than that put forward in the creation of mass society. For Morgan, the central thrust of mass society was misguided and a distraction to the small community, but it was not a villain or inherently evil, as it was for Borsodi and Brownell.⁵⁸

In fact, Morgan went to fairly great lengths to disassociate himself from Borsodi and his message, although they had corresponded since the mid-thirties and the two men got along well personally. In 1941, Morgan had even visited Borsodi's home in Suffern, New

York, and declared that a special man like Borsodi have a "place where he can work with full respect for his convictions. The desirability of there being places for such persons is one of my chief reasons for being interested in small communities." But Morgan resented having his ideas bent and misconstrued by Mildred Loomis, an ardent follower of Borsodi and the director of the School of Living from the late forties on. Loomis wrote incessantly to Morgan throughout the forties, beseeching and imploring him to lend his support and name to Borsodi's cause. An inveterate letter writer, she proselytized on Borsodi's behalf so strongly that Morgan complained in a letter to Lewis Mumford that he did not like the implication that he and Borsodi had the same views. Apparently this sentiment had spread throughout the small community movement enough for Mumford to have repeated it in one of his writings. Even Griscom Morgan, Arthur's son and a staff member of Community Service, Inc., expressed dissatisfaction over constantly disclaiming Borsodi's views because of "widespread feeling that we share them." He stated that the views of the Morgans were much more similar to those of Mumford than Borsodi.⁵⁹

Unlike Borsodi, the Morgans and Mumford were not obsessed with fleeing the city and destroying it so much as providing for the realization of organic social conditions in whatever settlement pattern people found themselves. Arthur Morgan confidently stated: "Every city in some degree comes to have elements of community spirit and community traits. Within cities there may be smaller community units, often the carry-overs of small community traditions." Even people plunked down in the middle of huge cities tended to seek out like-minded people to build informal associations or quasi-communities. Nevertheless, specialized communities such as fraternities, clubs, churches, study groups, and civic organizations were no substitute for real community; "while they help to satisfy the craving for community life, [they] take account of only a small part of the total interests of their members." A true community was "an association of individuals and families that, out of inclination, habit, custom, and mutual interest, act in concert as a unity in meeting their

common needs." The operative ideas consisted of collective action lodged in a base of common responsibility created by a "spirit of fellowship." Without some acceptance of at least a few of those traits, even "great" cities could not continue to exist.⁶⁰

All collective social structures, for Morgan, were ultimately based on the biological nature of human beings. They were social creatures, not solitary animals. The ability of speech confirmed that proposition. A collective existence was natural, it being difficult for individuals to survive on their own. "A man is not a normal organism by himself, but only in relations with others." Moreover, people were not just interested in social life, but "they crave community life." In this respect, Morgan's position very closely resembled Brownell's arguments. Both identified a natural impulse to live in communities. People adopted a certain spacing, or social distance, which varied from community to community; but the "extremes of solitude or intimacy" were usually undesirable variants. Too much of either condition produced dis-ease and maladjustment. When people linked themselves by means of proper spacing and a sense of commonality, the communities so formed were not just "mere hamlets--dwellings placed near each other by force of some circumstance. Rather, they have been social organisms in which men lived by unity of purpose and by community of effort."⁶¹

But in the United States, the small community, Morgan believed, had been taken for granted and overlooked. Open country farm life had been more carefully studied than had small towns. Only within in the decades of the twenties and thirties had people become concerned about its fate and had begun its intensive and scholarly study. "Because of neglect of the small community in social planning, it has tended to be stagnant and uninspiring, and to pass on its weaknesses to the city." Morgan recognized the common, but sometimes stereotypical limitations of small places and conceded their widespread existence: "socially enforced conformity of thought and action, narrowness of outlook, clannishness, jealousies, tendency to gossip, and lack of recreation facilities or of direction and counsel for young

people." Nevertheless, he argued that true communities guarded against such narrowness of outlook, and speculated that the existence of a handful of model communities could speed the adoption of techniques to promote the health of all small places through imitation. He cited the recognition of the advantages in the city-manager plan and its subsequent rapid diffusion to communities across the country. "The creation of even one finely designed community, . . . , probably would lead to that general type of social organization being imitated and reproduced many times."⁶²

Although Morgan never proposed specific details of his utopian community, in general he said that the community should point in the direction of a "regional and functional organization in which each level of society shall exercise control over subordinate levels, *but only to the extent necessary for the social welfare.*" Ideally, each place would operate as semi-autonomous entities with minimal recourse to predetermined and one-sided relationships between centralized authorities and small communities. Yet, Morgan recognized that local freedoms could only exist to the extent that they were grounded in local discipline and responsibilities. "But in such determination society must rely on the responsible good will, common sense, experience, and judgment of its members."⁶³

When Morgan came out with The Small Community (1942), regionalism was still an attractive social scientific concept, and he not unexpectedly (based on his experience in the TVA) incorporated it into his philosophy. Like the small community, regional authorities were not necessarily arbitrary in the scheme of things, because geographical formations were natural and did not necessarily coincide with political boundaries. Watersheds, rivers, and harbors were some of the likely areas for regional organizations. He cited the Delaware River, the Colorado River, New York harbor, and the TVA as natural places for regional authorities. Morgan posited four characteristics of regional government. First, it was important to delineate a natural area, a well-defined unit as the regional focus. Second, regions worked best on the theory of interdependence. "Regional plans shall not arbitrarily

conflict with or injure other areas or regions." Third, such a harmony of regions would be best accomplished by a supra-regional authority designated to develop a total plan or perspective from which it would advise individual regional authorities on how best to work together. Fourth, regions should be based on functional purposes, with the possibility of overlapping regions, each one providing a different function. Thus, he rejected the notion of "all-purpose" regions, as not existing in nature, and as part of a "tendency for regionalism to drift toward totalitarianism." This drift could be modulated by preventing regional planning from falling into a strictly governmental mode. Other institutions should have input into the process such as "industrial, professional, educational, fraternal, and philanthropic organizations." Regional planning would never be a panacea, but it could provide the centralization needed for aspects of society, like water control, road building, mining, and the production of specialized goods and services.⁶⁴

Regionalism, like the small community, involved not a "specific plan, but an attitude toward society and its problems." No social unit of a culture was self-sufficient or could remain isolated; regionalism was one method by which small communities could act together in their best interest and in the interest of the larger territory without recourse to traditional centralized authorities such as the states and the national government. Although Morgan never climbed aboard the regionalism bandwagon like the institutional regionalists, he did support it when he had the chance. For example, he wrote a very positive review of Baker Brownell's The Other Illinois (1958), a book about the poverty and second-class existence of down-state Illinois. "It seems possible that such a book, in an area, may contribute to a regional consciousness, a powerful incentive to regional development."⁶⁵

Another method of ameliorating the small community lay in new towns and intentional communities. Morgan had some hopes for these various endeavors, but suspected that their fate would approximate the record of most company towns like Pullman, Illinois, and Kohler, Wisconsin. "The limitations of American communities have not been primarily that

they have not fulfilled the dreams of their founders, but that those dreams were commonplace." Even Henry Ford's village industries idea was retried in Kingsport, Tennessee, with such positive results that overgrowth led to a loss of the very goals for which it was established. Morgan therefore called for a "well-proportioned community life," which would consist of a balance of many types of excellence, not just a "single kind" like decent housing or full employment but a plethora of cultural and democratic institutions. Such a place "has the best prospect for all-round success if it is a neighborhood of people who have in common enough of cultural life, social purpose, and capacity for mutual understanding to be good neighbors, and . . . would find the cultural influence of the family supported by that of the neighborhood."⁶⁶

The ultimate problem with modern society for Morgan was the lack of a real spiritual life, productive of ethics which worked. Small communities could have a cultural life just as advanced as any other, but when people did not try or did not manifest the proper discipline, they and their communities would fail. In this, Morgan professed a philosophy based on the simplistic, old-fashioned morality of responsibility and the "golden mean." Although "tried and true," such a message seemed a bit ill-fitting and naive in an increasingly high-powered mass society caught up in bigness, growth, and development. His analysis of modern life appeared traditional, repetitive, and unsophisticated, especially next to fellow utopians like Brownell and Borsodi. In a way he got caught, like Mumford, using outmoded and anachronistic metaphors and a touch of wishful thinking, by a fast moving society which left him behind, as if in another age. It was one thing to declare that the "neglect of a basic cultural unit (the small community) may be one of the primary reasons for the failure of human society to advance with greater surety," and another to explain why and how that happened and provide at least an outline of the good society. Despite authoring many books and pamphlets during his long lifetime, he never wrote a complete utopian tract or even a manifesto, although The Small Community came the closest to both. But radicalism did not

attract him on any level, so he continued to adumbrate the tenuous position of the small community and recite the characteristics of the fully-functioning community as an "elder statesman" of the movement.⁶⁷

He did begin, however, to acknowledge the revolution of rising expectations and the greater emphasis on personal satisfaction and individualism which began during the war, and came to fruition in the fifties. In fact, Morgan believed he had discovered a new principle of human behavior in what he called "the principle of economy of experience." He pointed out that people sought experiences in many different areas and fields of life, so they could feel well-rounded. For example, people aspired to beauty but tended to get caught up in the singular definitions and standards of the established field of art, or people sought exercise so they participated in activities where nothing but recreation took place. Morgan agreed with the search for happiness and individual gratification which came with living a multi-dimensional existence, but was concerned with the phenomenon of diffusion of energy and fragmentation of experience produced as a result of that search. Thus he argued for a unity of activities where "one undertaking might supply several needs, and it would not be necessary to have so many experiences in order that life might be full and well-proportioned." The phrases "art for art's sake" and "business is business" were statements of denial of the wholistic nature of life, in that they were put forward by people as if ideas and fields of activity were independent of each other. People should seek out the unity of areas of endeavor, much as they sought to build complete, well-rounded communities. In his characteristic way, Morgan exclaimed to Wisconsin rural sociologist John Kolb that this new principle "could be a key to harmonizing universality with simplicity and freedom from overstimulation." The best life was one lived on an even keel; the same advice held true for communities.⁶⁸

Much like Borsodi, Morgan put his faith in the special qualities of strong leaders to pull small communities into positions of greater health, prosperity, and self-sufficiency. He

accepted without question the necessity of a definite line between leaders and followers. On this issue, at least, he parted company with Brownell, who emphasized the democratic and egalitarian nature of the study group as the basis of community spirit and improvement. According to Morgan, however, "Men who are competent in their own fields see the fundamental social economy of giving a leader full authority in a field where he is competent. Too much deliberation and participation may wreck a program as surely as too little."⁶⁹

Such a position was not unreasonable when one was as certain of the efficacy and rightness of the small community as Morgan. The small community was not only the literal seedbed of culture, but was the best defense against totalitarian government because democracy grew best in small-scale settings. "The genius of democracy is to eliminate compulsion to uniformity, whether that compulsion be physical force or social pressure, and to develop common outlooks and aims by mutual inquiry, mutual interest, and mutual regard." So, like the other utopian communitarians, Morgan pointed to the small community as the most effective and natural bulwark against the excesses of statism. Morgan rejected revolutionary transformations--"Rapid large-scale changes generally come by ignoring individual variations and by enforcing large-scale uniformities. True democracy results from intimate relations and understanding The community is the natural home of democracy, and it can be the home of tolerance and freedom."⁷⁰

Communitarians found the job of convincing people of the virtues of democracy much easier than those of small communities. Many organizations populated the community field, and it was not for a lack of trying that the small community message largely failed to attract much attention. Gadfly of the movement, Loomis correctly saw that it lacked unity, but became so much of a true believer in Borsodi that she tended to alienate some of its major personalities, Morgan included. Utterly convinced of Borsodi's infallibility she said: "Mr. Borsodi sees as few others do a new day that is NEW; that he sees clear through the problem

of the good life, and how decentralization answers monopoly, war, exploitation, etc." Thus, she may have inadvertently blocked the development of a much needed common philosophy and course of action for the movement. To be sure, other communitarians unwittingly obstructed the movement by acting too harshly sometimes in reviewing the work of fellow theorists. For example, Griscom Morgan wrote a not very favorable review of Borsodi's Education for Living, and criticized Borsodi's righteousness and his "one true faith." Furthermore, he doubted whether it was sound enough to carry the message properly. Likewise, Brownell expressed disappointment in Arthur Morgan's review of The Human Community, saying he expected support from Morgan most of all. Zealot though she was, Loomis, as a utopian also, persisted in preaching the decentralist message (largely Borsodi's ideas) and successfully brought together many of the leaders of the movement for assorted conferences, institutes, and forums throughout the forties, fifties, and even the early sixties.⁷¹

Still, the small community movement never did reach a philosophical or an organizational unity. Without a core organization to promote a relatively unified program, it never became more than a diffuse movement, even in the years when the publication Free America was active. That lack of an organizational focus on the small community was what in part prompted Arthur Morgan to establish Community Service, Inc. Incorporated in 1940, he explained that it "aims toward a clear understanding of the nature, significance, and possibilities of the small, primary-group community as essential to a wholesome and long-lived society. The numerous live, purposeful communities in this and other countries need contact with each other and with new ideas. . . . Community Service is a center where ideas and attitudes concerning community may be appraised, developed and circulated. Its work is largely in response to many requests for help in specific cases." Community Service published Community Comments, which was similar to a Reader's Digest for the small community movement. In addition, it functioned as a forum for the Morgan's philosophy. It

also published a newsletter for its membership of a few hundred people. Community Service handled much of the sales of Arthur Morgan's books, carried on correspondence with a wide array of people and groups interested in the small community, did research on successful demonstrations of decentralization and self-help, and organized an annual conference on the small community, usually held at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, Morgan's home.⁷²

Community Service sponsored the first such conference in 1944, a ten day affair at Antioch College. Its purpose was to explore the social phenomenon of Americans returning to communities after the war. The conference stated its main concern: "Unless we act now to renew our genetic, cultural, and social resources at their source--the small community--a deterioration of our whole national life is inevitable." The conferees declared their fear that small towns could not compete with cities and had to come up with solutions to that problem quickly; "a concept of community life must emerge which is far more interesting, adventuresome, comprehensive, and adequate." Participants as diverse as Father Ligutti, John E. Vance, planner at Greenhills, Ohio, Lloyd Allen Cook, sociologist at Ohio State University, and Morgan himself concluded that many of the deficiencies and problems of rural life stemmed from control of the land. For example, the problem of tenancy demanded a better intergenerational method of land transfer. They mentioned a number of differing ways of bonding people to the land without enormous mortgages hanging over their heads: most had to do with separating control and ownership, with ownership residing in local cooperatives, the government, or private corporations, and farmers operating under long-term leases. The conference concluded with the expression of a strong yearning for fellowship, but also a realization of the need for rational planning based on practical information obtained from surveys and other data-gathering techniques. The conference's final words demonstrated a continuing concern over maintaining a balance between the need for a powerful decision-making body to bring about united action and the movement's opposition

to too much centralization and the possibility of tyranny. Churches in particular were seen as untapped and valuable sources of cultural transformation, but they needed to defend against transgressing on the rights of the individual. People were not to be placed in bondage to the social group or any institution. "As points of fundamental agreement are kept in mind, churches should find ground of cooperation and even union, though the danger inherent in monopoly and one-church towns needs to be guarded against."⁷³

Subsequent small community conferences continued to discuss the theoretical nature of community and the potential for a community "revolution." But as the war ended and the troops were demobilized, the topics turned more toward practical matters and techniques of actually getting people involved in community change on the local level. "Frontline" subjects emphasized were the training of leaders and leadership, the role of Morgan's community council idea, Brownell's study group, the concept of a People's College, and industries and occupations appropriate to the small community. By the 1946 conference, the enemy was no longer the uncertainty of war, but that of big business. Perhaps not coincidentally, Community Service published Morgan's book A Business of My Own in that same year. Morgan conducted extensive research for the book which was a cross between a how-to manual and a compendium of cases of successful small businesses. He argued that small businesses contributed greatly to America's prosperity, and that they in particular could be one of the greatest promoters of small community welfare. Furthermore, like Borsodi, Morgan maintained that bigness and profitability were not necessarily related. "By and large in America relatively small business is more profitable than very large business." Moreover, he agreed emphatically with the concept of the mixed economic system. "It is recognition of the fact that life and truth are too varied and complex to be confined within the pattern of any single deliberately planned economic system. In this varied pattern, small independent industries and services find their place." The only real barriers to businesses starting up in small places were some government over regulation, overt resistance by some large

corporations, and a lack of realization in villagers themselves that their communities could be practical sites for small businesses. Indeed, even these impediments were not the biggest problem: "the problem is not so much whether it is feasible to do business in small communities as it is whether small communities are good places to live in." Small places had to make themselves more attractive in terms of providing the amenities of a well-cultured life. But again, small businesses by themselves could not make great small communities. "One of the greatest handicaps of America is the supposition that sound and adequate economics is all that is needed to make life satisfactory. . . . That attitude has spoiled life"74

In 1946, Morgan had his clearest and most direct statement published on the role of utopias in the progress of humanity. Nowhere was Somewhere: How History Makes Utopias and How Utopias Make History made two main points. First, utopias functioned as dreams of perfection for a humanity weary and ground down by the burden of life, enticing and hopefully leading it toward the ideals which were actually within its reach, but had to be envisioned and crafted in order for it to act in a sublime and uplifting way. Thus, utopias were some of the requisite tools for building human culture. To the extent that societies were planned at all, utopias provided possible goals toward which to build. Yet, visions of the good society themselves were subject to revision and re-creation based on influences from the surrounding cultural milieu. "Thus we find a constant interaction between the ideas and dreams of men, and their actual achievements. Utopian dreams have vastly influenced practical plans for government, while the best that men have done in government and society has entered into the making of utopias."75

Small communitarians faced a problem not so much in fashioning a utopian message but implementing it--its conversion into an ideology to be actualized in real social conditions. If few people bought into their vision there was little the utopians could do except to continue the attempt at persuasion and perhaps, create demonstration communities.

This dilemma appeared conspicuously at every conference on the small community where the question was inevitably asked what should be done about establishing a national association for the promotion of the small community. And just as perennially, the answer from most participants came back that such a centralized view and authority contradicted their stated decentralist and localist beliefs. They also worried about duplication of efforts and abuse of power that a national small community organization implied for the movement. Perhaps they saw their competition as already being too strong to overcome because, in remarks made at the 1949 conference the communitarians indicated that vis-a-vis the welfare state, the only chance they stood was to create many voluntary associations. Since most of the communitarian leaders advocated the founding of such groups at the grassroots level by local study groups or community councils, they had in effect laid down theoretical restraints on the potential of a national leadership to affect significant change. Centralized administration, in the final analysis, was so anathema to the communitarians that they simply could not bring themselves to do what would have been in their best interests in the sense of projecting a common front. The utopia of small communities remained as elusive as ever in the midst of a burgeoning mass society.⁷⁶

The fifties were not particularly supportive of the small community. Although the community development movement gained momentum in these years (with governments at all levels becoming major players), the kind of pull-one's-community-up-by-its-bootstraps concept of Morgan and other decentralists did not emerge as a strong methodology. Intentional communities found themselves relegated even farther into the background of the cultural landscape. Morgan maintained a personal interest in intentional communities through the activities of his sons. The youngest, Griscom, was instrumental in establishing "The Vale" near Yellow Springs. Ernest lived in Celo, near Burnsville, North Carolina, on property Arthur had helped purchase in 1935 while working at the TVA. These places, although successful by most standards, were small and had a muted influence on the larger

culture. Morgan's second to last book on the utopian nature of small communities, The Community of the Future: and the Future of Community (1957), reflected the sober realization that for all his tremendous missionary energy and that of the movement as well, little had been accomplished in the attempt to extricate the small community from the clutches of the status quo. He titled the last chapter of the book "Through the Dark Valley," which represented his conception of the era in which humanity found itself. He was sure humanity would emerge from its time of troubles to a better future. "Evidently our species is in transition to another and more inclusive harmony." Yet, during that bleak interlude before the dawn, and despite "the very heavy odds which the spirit of community must face in the years to come," people needed to meet the challenge of preserving the best elements of human culture--the seeds of a new beginning. "To insure that the spirit of community is not lost is the adventure on which we are engaged."⁷⁷

Whether utopianism was merely a holding action or active planning for a pilot model of society, some element of planning has always been part of the process of envisioning a perfect social order. Many small community enthusiasts looked with favor on the planning movement as it emerged in the twenties and thirties. Some, like Morgan, pushed planning into its utopian dimension in the forties and fifties, and identified utopia with the small community. Others like Borsodi, Brownell, and Agar, although not taking their cue from the planning tradition, at least acknowledged its role in the process of local development. For some other observers of modern society, notably sociologist David Riesman, utopian ideals and community plans were such valuable cultural commodities that they should be actively sought out and developed in the public discourse. "A revival of the tradition of utopian thinking seems to me one of the important intellectual tasks of today." He feared that people, especially intellectuals, dismayed and troubled by a world seemingly turned upside down by events of the thirties and forties, would find it "easier to concentrate on programs

for choosing among lesser evils, even to the point where these evils can scarcely be distinguished, one from the other."⁷⁸

In this respect, Riesman liked the explanatory power in sociologist Karl Mannheim's distinction between the terms "ideology" and "utopia." Mannheim had argued that they encapsulated cultural forces in a dialectical relationship; the political fictions of ideologies buttressed the social order, while the wish-dreams of utopias functioned to shape social changes. In their pure state, utopias were radical in that they would induce change at the roots of society. Once they were converted into ideologies as interpreted by Riesman, "utopias of one age tend to harden in a distorted form into the ideologies of the next, taken on faith rather than rationally rediscovered." In any case, the truth or falsity of a particular utopia was not the prime issue; what an age or era made of the utopian message constituted the operative truth. By the forties, American social scientists accepted the theory of the sociology of knowledge for the most part, but it did not suit all utopians. Baker Brownell, for instance, communicated his disgust for Mannheim's ideas to novelist and communitarian Granville Hicks in 1945: "Mannheim, so far as I know him, represents a tendency in modern thinking that I particularly detest. . . . His sociology of knowledge is largely, it seems to me, a devaluation of knowledge and intellectual life. They [standards of values] thus become mainly instrumental and secondary to other drives and motives for which there are no adequate criteria or critical standards." Brownell went on to grudgingly grant Mannheim a certain credit for his insight, but steadfastly defended the utopian small community against the encroachments of valueless cultural relativity which seemed to follow from Mannheim's position.⁷⁹

Riesman lamented the lack of compelling utopian visions in the twentieth century, and agreed with both John Dewey and Robert Lynd and their attacks on relativism. While not attracted to their urgency for immediate action, Riesman did find fault with most utopian plans after the zenith of American utopianism, represented by Edward Bellamy's Looking

Backward and Ignatius Donnelly's populist prophecies. New, fresh utopian visions arose in the thirties, but administrators compromised the utopian potential of the TVA, and the war undermined the chances of the greentowns and communitarian projects of the FSA in the forties. Riesman was far less charitable to the Technocracy movement's Howard Scott, who was included among the "cranks and charlatans" who "fill what market there is for big, bold, bad plans. More sedate is the work of men like Ralph Borsodi, and the Southern Agrarians; while seemingly just the opposite of the Technocrats, these nostalgic writers are quite as insouciant in prescribing for the power-relations of modern industrial society." Riesman believed that only architects had kept the utopian vision alive and vibrant. In this respect, he cited the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Lewis Mumford, Charles Ascher, and Catherine Bauer. In particular, Riesman praised Percival and Paul Goodman and their book Communitas (1947). He believed that the Goodmans had overcome the cultural blinders of their own time, and had peered into utopian truth about the problems of modern society. What they saw was another story, but the fact that Riesman singled them out constituted a strong statement of utopian faith. In his own words, "That faith is supported by the very tradition of utopian thinking in which the planner works, and which is a record of just such human ability to transcend the ideologies provided by the culture and to add something new to the small precious stock of social ideas."⁸⁰

Utopians not only added provocative new social formulations to humankind's cultural inheritance, but acted in part as the collective conscience of society. Small community utopians assumed an inherent human capacity for adaptation, yet questioned the need for the extreme changes seemingly required by the cultural shift to a mass society. By and large, they characterized such shifts as the end results of a process of seduction by mere idols and icons which were neither ideal nor practical, and above all, were flatly unnecessary to the health and well-being of the human community. Small communitarians did not reject the system of democratic capitalism, but stridently repudiated the major accommodations forced

on it by the rise of mass society. They believed that mass society had cut the emotional support system from under historically nourishing communities and other primary groups. People were cast adrift on a fragmented, atomistic, and specialized society in which responsibility was rendered homeless. Borsodi, Brownell, Morgan, and their supporters adamantly proclaimed that the small community should come first before all other cultural considerations; it was the key to utopia. Without it American society had little chance for stability and prosperity, harmony and contentment. When they dissented from the established order, they quarreled not with modernism, but with the thrust of mass society. In their minds, the two were not co-extensive; they had no necessary connection, and humanity merged them at its peril.

NOTES

1. Free America, 1937-1947.

2. Paul K. Conkin, Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959), 24-28, 294-295. George M. Lubick, "Restoring the American Dream: The Agrarian-Decentralist Movement, 1930-1946," The South Atlantic Quarterly 84 (Winter 1985): 64. Borsodi was not alone among distributists in his ideas or actions. Another of the highly differentiated distributists was Father Ligutti, who founded the Granger Homesteads community, a federally-aided cooperative village, northwest of Des Moines, Iowa, in 1934. Borsodi's view of agricultural production (tending toward greater self-sufficiency) did not exactly square with one of the most recent interpretations of Jefferson's commercial ideas--Joyce Appleby's "Commercial Farming and the 'Agrarian Myth' in the Early Republic," Journal of American History 68 (March 1982): 833-849; see also Paul Thompson, "Agrarianism and the American Philosophical Tradition," Agriculture and Human Values 7 (Winter 1990): 3-9.

3. Ralph Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1929), 1. Harry Elmer Barnes, foreword to This Ugly Civilization, vii. For the place of the Southern Agrarians in the American radical tradition, see Richard H. Pells, Radical Visions and American Dreams (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 96-151.

4. For the Country Life Movement see David Danbom, The Resisted Revolution (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979). Ralph Borsodi, Flight From the City (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1933), preface, 146; Ralph Borsodi, Prosperity and Security (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938), ix.

5. Borsodi, Flight From the City, xii-xiii, 143; Ralph Borsodi, Education and Living (Suffern, New York: School of Living, 1948), viii-ix. Subsequently the School of Living received substantial monetary support from Seward Collins, Richard Crane, Graham Carey, and Chauncy Stillman. Borsodi administered the expenditure of almost \$300,000 before the beginning of World War II, when the intensive period of inquiries into alternative communities was severely curtailed.

6. Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization, 204, 241-242.

7. Merle Curti, The Growth of American Thought (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1982, originally published 1943), 688-689. Borsodi, Flight From the City, 52.

8. Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization, 3.

9. Borsodi, Flight From the City, 9; Ralph Borsodi, "Planning For What?," Free America 3, no. 12 (December 1939): 16, 17.
10. Ralph Borsodi, "Green Revolution--Back to the Land," Christian Century 60 (July 28, 1943): 866; Borsodi, Flight From the City, 14-18. Borsodi estimated that less than one-third of the price went to production costs. In this regard, see especially his The Distribution Age: A Study of the Economy of Modern Distribution (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1927), 7-10.
11. Borsodi, "Green Revolution,"; Borsodi, Flight From the City, 3-8; Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization, 35-37.
12. Borsodi, Flight From the City, 3-6; Ralph Borsodi, "A Plan for Rural Life," Agriculture in Modern Life, by O. E. Baker, Ralph Borsodi, and M. L. Wilson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 269-272. The "Sevenacre" experiment was an intentional rural homestead established as a demonstration site for Borsodi's utopian ideas. Borsodi, "Green Revolution," 868; Donald Davidson, "Agrarianism for Commuters," American Review 1 (May 1933): 238.
13. Ralph Borsodi, "A Civilization of Factories, or a Civilization of Homes?," The New Republic 59 (July 31, 1929): 281-283.
14. Borsodi, "A Plan for Rural Life," 194-195, 189. See also Borsodi's "The Case Against Farming as a Big Business," The Land 6 (Winter 1947-48): 446-451.
15. Borsodi, "A Plan for Rural Life," 189; Donald Davidson, review of Agriculture in Modern Life, in Free America 3, no. 12 (December 1939): 18-19.
16. Borsodi, "A Plan for Rural Life," 199. Edward Shillen, "According to Borsodi," Commonweal 50 (April 22, 1949): 50-51. Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization, 329. Borsodi was somewhat vague about how coherence as a group would actually work. Unlike many utopian writers, he ignored the realm of rules and restrictions on behavior, and assumed that if everyone were successful at "doing their own homestead thing," that social and political relationships would not be problematical.
17. Borsodi, Flight From the City, 18-20, 171; Ralph Borsodi, "Dayton, Ohio Makes Social History," Nation 136 (1933): 447; Borsodi, This Ugly Civilization, 10-11.
18. Borsodi, Flight From the City, 154-161; William H. Issel, "Ralph Borsodi and the Agrarian Response to Modern America," Agricultural History 41 (April 1967): 160-164.
19. Mel Most, "The Rockland Homesteaders: 50 Years Later," New York World Telegram, June 24, 1973, np; Borsodi, Prosperity and Security, 313.

20. Borsodi, Education and Living, xiii; Richard Schubart, "Ralph Borsodi: The Political Biography of a Utopian Decentralist, 1886-1977," Ph.D dissertation, State University of New York, 1983, 157-178.
21. Borsodi, Education and Living, 574-576.
22. Ibid., 51, 67-68.
23. Ibid., 116, 190-191.
24. Ibid., 683, 693, 696, 697.
25. Ibid., 686, 712. Richard C. Crepeau, Melbourne Village: The First Twenty-Five Years (1946-1971) (Orlando: University of Central Florida Press, 1988), 59-60.
26. Conkin, 97; Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1936). Rexford Tugwell, review of This Ugly Civilization, in Saturday Review 6 (June 21, 1930): 1143.
27. "Biography of Baker Brownell," Finding Aid, Baker Brownell Papers, Northwestern University Archives, hereafter abbreviated NUA.
28. As early as 1926, Brownell expanded the syllabus for his Contemporary Thought course into a book which hinted at these concerns, entitled The New Universe (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1926).
29. "The School of Living Announcement," 1939-1940, folder 12, box 54, Brownell Papers, NUA.
30. Brownell to Borsodi, October 19, 1936, folder 8, box 21, Brownell Papers, NUA; Brownell to Chamberlain, January 4, 1940, Jensen to Brownell, February 14, 1940, both from folder 10, box 24, Brownell Papers, NUA.
31. "School of Living Report," 1941, folder 12, box 54, Brownell Papers, NUA.
32. Baker Brownell, The Human Community (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 3, 4.
33. Brownell to Herdman, August 9, 1939, folder 5, box 24, Brownell Papers, NUA. Thomas B. Colwell, Jr., "Baker Brownell's Philosophy of Community and Its Educational Implications," Ph.D dissertation, New York University, 1968, i-iii, 11, 126-149; Brownell, The Human Community, 221-252, 7.
34. Brownell, The Human Community, 7-9.

35. Brownell, The New Universe, 229.
36. Baker Brownell and Frank Lloyd Wright, Architecture and Modern Life (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1937), 69, 71, 73, 75, 95, 101, 118.
37. Brownell, The Human Community, 179, 256, 201. For a discussion of the general debate on the mass society see Christopher Brookeman, American Culture and Society Since the 1930s (London: MacMillan, 1984), chap. 5. Baker Brownell, "The Small Community and the Mass State," 1-5, 1945, folder--Baker Brownell, box--Bo-Bu, series II, Arthur Morgan Papers, Antioch College, hereafter abbreviated AC.
38. Brownell, The Human Community, 128-134, 178-179.
39. Ibid., 198-200.
40. Ibid., 202-204.
41. Ibid., 204-205.
42. Ibid., 205-207.
43. Ibid., 207-210.
44. Brownell to Cooke, November 1, 1946, folder 3330.85, box 382, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC.
45. Brownell, The Human Community, 59-60, 61. Although Brownell did not use the phrase "like a conquered province" in these pages, he did several times elsewhere in the book. Interestingly, anarchist and libertarian scholar Paul Goodman used the phrase for the title of one of his books in 1966.
46. Ibid., 92-95; Hans Blumenfeld, review of The Human Community, in The Annals of the American Academy 274 (March 1951): 244-245.
47. Brownell, The Human Community, 289-290.
48. Interview of Brownell, November 3, 1950, 3447, box 398, series 200, RG 1.2, RFA, RAC; Jerome Myers, review of The Human Community, in the American Sociological Review 16 (June 1951): 432; Hans Blumenfeld, 245; Boyd H. Bode, review of The Human Community, in the New Republic 125 (July 31, 1951): 20-21; Oscar Handlin, review of The Human Community, in the New York Times, November 26, 1950, 46; Richard Poston, review of The Human Community, in The Saturday Review of Literature 34 (March 8, 1951): 16-17.

49. Baker Brownell, The College and the Community: A Critical Study in Higher Education (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), 241.
50. Brownell to Morgan, February 27, 1952, folder--Baker Brownell, box 7, series VII, Morgan Papers, AC; Arthur E. Morgan, The Small Community: Foundation of Democratic Life (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1942), 261; Arthur Morgan, "Design for the Small Community," Free America 6, no. 2 (February 1942): 5.
51. "Biographical Note," folder--Biography, box 1, series I, Morgan Papers, AC; Baker Brownell, forward to The Small Community, x.
52. Brownell to Morgan, August 29, 1935, Brownell to Morgan, February 24, 1936, Morgan to Brownell, March 5, 1936, Morgan to Brownell, December 9, 1936, Morgan to Brownell, December 29, 1936, Brownell to Morgan, July 15, 1937, Brownell to Morgan, July 27, 1937, all from folder--Baker Brownell, box--Bo-Bu, series II, Morgan Papers, AC.
53. Morgan, "Design for the Small Community," 5; Morgan, The Small Community, 19.
54. Morgan, The Small Community, 3.
55. *Ibid.*, 7-8, 6.
56. *Ibid.*, 6-7.
57. *Ibid.*, 12-13.
58. *Ibid.*, 18-19. See also Roy Talbert, Jr., for an assessment of Morgan both as a progressive and a utopian, in FDR's Utopian: Arthur Morgan of the TVA (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1987), introduction.
59. Morgan to Templin, February 25, 1942, folder--School of Living, box--Sanderson-Sh, series II, Morgan Papers, AC; Loomis to A. Morgan, February 7, 1941, Loomis to A. Morgan, December 13, 1944, both from folder--Mildred Loomis, box--Lausche-Ly, series II, Morgan Papers, AC; A. Morgan to Mumford, June 28, 1950, G. Morgan to Mumford, August 15, 1950, both from folder--Lewis Mumford, box--Morgan B.-Nav, series II, Morgan Papers, AC.
60. Morgan, The Small Community, 88, 32, 20, 22-29.
61. *Ibid.*, 31, 32, 42.
62. *Ibid.*, 60, 61.

63. Ibid., 63.
64. Ibid., 68-70, 78, 80.
65. Ibid., 81; Arthur Morgan, review of The Other Illinois, by Baker Brownell, in Journal of Higher Education 29, no. 4 (April 1958): 230-231.
66. Morgan, The Small Community, 103-104, 106.
67. Ibid., 107, 115-116.
68. Ibid., 237, 239; Morgan to Kolb, September 30, 1942, folder--J. H. Kolb, box--Ke-Laughlin, series II, Morgan Papers, AC.
69. Morgan, The Small Community, 172, 173.
70. Ibid., 280, 282.
71. Loomis to Morgan, November 6, 1942, G. Morgan to Loomis, May 21, 1949, both from folder--Mildred Loomis, box--Lausche-Ly, series II, Morgan Papers, AC; Brownell to Morgan, December 12, 1950, folder--Baker Brownell, box--Bo-Bu, series II, Morgan Papers, AC; "Conference on Getting the Most Out of Life for Ourselves and Families," September 5-8, 1953, folder--School of Living, box--Sanderson-Sh, series II, Morgan Papers, AC, included such names as Mumford, Borsodi, Morgan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and psychologist Carl Rogers.
72. Arthur Morgan, Community Comments 15, no. 1 (March 1957): 11; Community Comments, folder--Community Comments, box 5, series VII, Morgan Papers, AC.
73. "Conference on the Post-War American Community," folder--Conf. on the Small Community, 1944, box 7C, series VII, Morgan Papers, AC.
74. "Conference on the Small Community, 1946," folder--Conference on Small Community, 1946, box 7C, series VII, Morgan Papers, AC; Arthur Morgan, A Business of My Own (Yellow Springs: Community Service, Inc., 1946), 5, 7, 8, 22.
75. Arthur Morgan, Nowhere was Somewhere: How History Makes Utopias and How Utopias Make History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 14.
76. "6th Annual Conference on the Small Community," 1949, folder--Conference on the Small Community, box 7C, series VII, Morgan Papers, AC.

77. Talbert, 202, gives 1937 as the year the Celo land was purchased, but 1935 was the year given by the "Biographical Note," p. 1, folder--Biography, box 1, series I, Morgan Papers, AC. Morgan's final utopian work was It Can Be Done in Education (Yellow Springs: Community Service, Inc., 1962), concerning his connection with an intentional community and people's colleges in India. Arthur Morgan, The Community of the Future: and the Future of Community (Yellow Springs: Community Service, Inc., 1957), 160-161. Morgan used his home town of Yellow Springs, Ohio, as a case study of what a small community can do by way of supporting small industries in Industries for Small Communities (Yellow Springs: Community Service, Inc., 1953).

78. David Riesman, "Some Observations on Community Plans and Utopia," Individualism Reconsidered (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1954), 70.

79. Ibid., 72; Louis Wirth, preface to Ideology and Utopia, x-xxx; Brownell to Hicks, April 12, 1945, folder 7, box 28, Brownell Papers, NUA.

80. Riesman, 76, 77, 78, 90.

CHAPTER 6
THE AGRARIAN SMALL COMMUNITY

Whereas the utopian communitarians touted the small community as the basis of a utopian alternative to mass society, by the forties many agrarians looked to the small community and related village-like social organizations to provide stability and justice for an agricultural class which was decreasing in size and influence at an alarming rate. These agrarians no longer glibly and facilely repeated the overworked adages and nostrums associated with the traditional pastoral image of farmers as sturdy, self-reliant yeomen, noble and patriotic in the service of themselves and their country. Instead, they sought an approach which would combine the best of modern science, technology, conservation, and business practices with the most enduring forces of rural society--the family, church, school, and the country town. The traditional moral idealism of agrarianism gradually gave way to greater economic realism. Agrarians realized that open country communities largely lacked the ability to stand on their own; they were part of the larger society, even tied into worldwide patterns of finance and trade.

In order to counter the continuing threat to farming communities, agrarians sought models of social and economic organization which would help keep more people on the land, end rural poverty, increase agricultural productivity, and contribute to the amelioration of rural communities. Of all those who came to the defense of the rural population, most cited the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) as the greatest modern example of the potential for the renaissance of land, people, and their communities. In Roots in the Earth (1943), farmers P. Alston Waring and Walter Teller hoped "regional developments like the TVA will be the logical developments of the future. If we can judge by what is happening to farmers there, it

is a method we can ill afford to ignore." Communitarian Wayland Hayes added in The Small Community Looks Ahead (1947) "The TVA is much more than a program for relating and balancing local and regional interests. It is a genuine effort to develop a social structure in harmony with natural conditions and local potentialities." Southern Agrarian Herman C. Nixon made clear his position: "The TVA has facilitated or encouraged town-country cooperation, as in educational facilities." Not alone in their admiration for TVA, these agrarians were joined by many others, including utopian Baker Brownell, who demonstrated his allegiance to the agrarian cause and its expression in rural communities as part of the TVA's mission. This task "was to develop through modern technology the magnificent resources of the Valley and make them available to the people within the frame of their normal community and family life." It was the "great sociotechnological experiment of the century."¹

The land occupied a high priority not only for TVA and agrarians, but as we have seen, all varieties of communitarians: institutional, regional, social scientific, and utopian. The land connected them to the real world as well as each other, and provided the physical base for small communities. For example, in much the same way as Ralph Borsodi had turned to the land as a place of refuge, another intellectual-activist, Louis Bromfield, projected his agrarian vision onto the land and looked to the soil and agriculture as his alternative to an increasingly money-oriented and materialistic world. Although not technically a utopian with a blueprint of the perfect society, Bromfield searched for the ideal of the good, denounced those aspects of established society which clashed with his vision of the virtuous life, and promulgated some general principles conducive to the production of a better cultural order. In other words, Bromfield located the good society in the agrarian small community.

Born in Mansfield, Ohio, Louis Bromfield (1896-1956) learned early in life about Midwestern small town and rural values. Prodded by the high hopes of his family, he

entered Cornell University only to withdraw a year later to help run the family farm. Returning to college in 1916, he studied journalism at Columbia, until his desire to experience the world at war caused him to enlist in the United States Army Ambulance Service in 1917. In the 1920s he worked as a reporter and night editor in New York City. Later he was a drama and music critic and columnist. While an advertising manager for G. P. Putnam's Sons, he published his first novel, The Green Bay Tree, in 1924. He then began to write full time, and moved with his family to France for fourteen years. His expatriate years proved to be the basis of his rapid and successful rise as a novelist. Bromfield won the 1926 Pulitzer Prize for the novel Early Autumn (1926). He and his wife became the acquaintances of many Europeans and American in high society, and developed a fondness for the simple but rich lifestyles and architecture of provincial France. The Bromfields returned to Ohio in 1938 under the threat of the rapidly approaching war. There, with royalties from his books and screenplays, he bought three run-down farms, totaling one thousand acres, in Richland County, Ohio. He dubbed this place "Malabar Farm" after the verdant coastal area of Malabar in India, the site of many Bromfield family vacations. After a speaking tour and a brief stint as a Hollywood writer, Bromfield returned to Malabar Farm and took up a career as an agriculturalist, ecological spokesman, and rural visionary.²

Again like Borsodi and liberal and radical agrarians, Bromfield focused on the issues of security, independence, and stability for rural dwellers and their communities. Although his utopian vision of a future perfect society never attained Borsodi's level of concreteness and clarity, it did spring from many of the same intellectual roots. The two thinkers, and most other agrarians for that matter, shared a passion for Jeffersonianism and the moral agricultural order. Medium-sized farms, each owned and operated by a family provided the most stability, dignity, and prosperity for both the individual entrepreneurial units and the nation as a whole. Morality inhered in the relationship of farmer and the land; it taught responsibility, honesty, hard work, thrift, and perseverance. Such noble values were then

passed on from generation to generation, inviolate and uncorruptible. The temptation to amass riches was limited and moderated by the land and the nature of farm work itself. Bromfield, like Jefferson, saw no reason why a society of equals could not exist on the "good earth." Yeoman farmers constituted the heart and soul of both the local community and the larger republic. "No great democrat ever realized more clearly than himself [Jefferson] that the survival of democracy and its growth are founded upon the stake of a citizen in the government and the nation to which he belongs, upon his paying direct taxes for the support of that government and in his ownership of a little shop or a little piece of land which makes him a stockholder in a vast corporation whose welfare was his direct interest."³

Bromfield's idealism, like Borsodi's, sought the mitigation of the "evils" of industrialization and materialism. Both believed that the solution did not lie with more government at any level. Bromfield, especially, maintained that stable, self-sufficient farming communities, loosely defined, could be largely self-governing. But unlike Borsodi, Bromfield argued that pervasive dehumanization sprang from the selfishness, greed, and puritanism of industrialists, distributors, and bureaucrats, rather than from the economic system as such. He claimed that people lived in what he called "the age of irritation," because their potentials had been turned toward destruction rather than creation; this produced a constant irritation that threatened to create a cancer fatal to civilization. Indeed, he never really approached the confrontational, militant style of Borsodi, preferring instead to withdraw and ally himself with a milder pastoralism, embodied in the language of historian Leo Marx's "middle landscape" and the garden. In farm life, Bromfield found an alternative to the "tyranny" of the industrial world; the simplicity of agricultural work and the inherent integrity and stability of ecological thinking and action provided an antidote to the "poisoning" of the Jeffersonian vision by a modern world seemingly out of control. He ultimately wanted to recapture the panoply of democratic values he attributed to agrarian communities of the Midwest, update them to withstand the rigors of modernity, and allow

them to transcend the environmental ugliness and social horrors he saw as endemic to commercialized industrialism, by focusing on utopianized versions of fertile soil and the "good farmer."⁴

Having witnessed the general demise of the Jeffersonian dream through the diminution of the equanimity and potency of rural culture and the rise of what he considered crass materialism during his childhood in Ohio, Bromfield wanted to recreate the intimate, warm, if somewhat circumscribed society, which had taken its strength from a close relationship with the land and animals. His goal became the reconciliation of traditional rural values with selected techniques of modern, scientific agriculture which emerged after World War II. He sought further to create a home in what he believed was the best of agrarian, rural American society. He identified his agent of utopia in the person of the good farmer--the farmer as artist, conservator, ecologist, and naturalist. He talked about "the good farmer, the real farmer, and not that category of men who remain on the land because circumstance dropped them there and who go on, hating their land, hating their work and their animals. . . ." The good farmer, working with nature rather than fighting or trying to outguess it, would be perfected by healthy soil--nature's fountainhead. The primary utopian characteristic of perfectibility could be approximated by aligning oneself with the principles of ecology and nature. Bromfield sincerely believed that an ideal balance existed in a natural and objective form, and its attainment gave meaning and purpose to human life. People were basically good, but were corrupted by society in their search for that better life. The wayward social order prevented people from realizing the natural laws associated with the good farmer, environmental balance, and small-scale agricultural communities.⁵

That a real golden age had existed in American, particularly the Western Reserve, Bromfield was quite certain. Simple, but strong in its material life, the nineteenth-century agrarian community exuded emotional and psychic richness. Writing during the Depression, Bromfield traced the rise and decline of agrarian civilization to 1914 in The Farm (1933). It

was the "story of a way of living which has largely gone out of fashion," although it was a "good way of life." "It has in it two fundamentals which were once and may be again intensely American characteristics. These are integrity and idealism. Jefferson has been dead more than a hundred years and there is no longer any frontier, but the things which both represented are immortal. They are tough qualities needed in times of crisis." Millions of people experienced that time of crisis deeply in the thirties whether they lived on farms or not. But Bromfield believed that the equalitarian agrarian community of semi-autonomous family farms was in the process of breakup even before the Great War. He wrote: "The Farm is a story of the pioneers who subdued a great, potentially rich wilderness, and in so doing, came near to destroying its riches." At first, they got it right: "There were no great 'industrial kings' or any 'high-pressure salesmen' or bankers who were 'omnipotent.' There was no overproduction. There was no lack of market. There was no unemployment. There was no starvation." The community constituted a "natural" democracy. Bromfield likened the good agrarian community to Bronson Alcott's world of utopias: "That solid, prosperous, pathetically idealistic world had curiosity and a touching desire, once so typical of America, to learn, to grow and expand, not in the pocketbook, but in the mind and spirit."⁶

But then the "religion of business" arrived with its "bottom-line" mentality and dislike of individualism and character-building eccentricity. Bromfield maintained it had always been there, lurking in American history in the form of Hamiltonianism. "I think that if Alexander Hamilton had looked ahead he would have had the American dollar stamped with the motto, 'Nothing succeeds like success.' It lies at the root of the average American's incapacity to understand and appreciate life, of his habit of living always to the limit of his income and often beyond it." Neither spartan nor hedonistic, Bromfield sought an individual and collective life of moderation, in harmony with one's labor, fellow workers, and one's physical and social environment, devoid of those nasty alienating relationships noted by Karl Marx and every subsequent social critic worth their salt. The paradoxical pitfalls of limitless

progress dovetailed with the "American passion for speculation, and for the abysmal helplessness of the American in a financial depression--the American who does not own his own home, although he has his automobile--the American without enough saved to support his family for six months." As victims of the new consumer society, people found their ideas of the good perverted because "One has to keep up a false front, and a good many Americans worry themselves into the grave struggling to maintain that bogus facade." Seduced by the perennial pot at the end of the rainbow, shrewd and exploitive businessmen overtook the agrarian commonwealth, and lined the growing urban horizon with industry and smokestacks, the back streets with workers' shacks, and their pockets with special tax breaks and contracts awarded through "back-room deals." Once prosperous farms and villages fell into disrepair and infertility that only pessimistic owners and uncaring tenants could create. Without their real awareness, citizens of the Western Reserve waged an all-out ideological battle between Jeffersonianism and Hamiltonianism; and crass commercialism won. "One had to be successful, no matter how success was achieved. One must make money, no matter how one came by it. The only hell was poverty and lack of success, and the only heaven was material."⁷

For Bromfield, Ohio farming communities, and by implication, American agricultural locales, were dependent on their people and their respect for and knowledge of the land--a symbiotic relationship which existed only within well established and understood limits. These parameters remained unchanging or at most, open to only very gradual alteration. Hills and forests, valleys and streams constituted the agrarian garden, which, once "tamed," should remain free from further tampering and exploitation. Disruption of this natural balance would inevitably yield social poverty, both material and spiritual. Seen in this light, agriculture ideally produced a culture of conservation. Of course, not all farmers acted as stewards of the soil, but in the long run, Americans would find their real wealth in the natural abundance of the land; if that capacity ever vanished, industrial and urban civilization would

necessarily disappear as well. Bromfield believed that essential balance had been compromised even before World War I; he ended The Farm "on a note of pessimism, regarding the future of agriculture and that note remains because it was authentic and justified in the year 1914."⁸

By 1945, with the publication of Pleasant Valley, Bromfield's discouragement turned to optimism, "a glowing optimism," concerning the potential of agriculture to regain its ecologically sound and culturally vibrant and socially supportive nature. He wrote in that manner "not from any change in conviction or point of view, but because of the great advances which had taken place and because in the intervening period the science of agriculture has probably made more progress than in all the preceding history of the world." The heart of Bromfield's vision was not dependent on a particular social or economic arrangement, but on the requirements of healthy soil--the interface of the organic and the inorganic. Repeating a phrase made famous by the New Deal soil conservationist Hugh Bennett, Bromfield constantly said that "poor land makes poor people." He believed that poor people would exploit not only the land, but each other as well. He had seen the scarred land of the Great Plains Dust Bowl, and with it, its scarred human occupants. He was convinced that by working with nature, specifically the soil, one could create a whole farm, a whole life, and a whole community. He accepted, along with other "New Agriculture" advocates such as Bennett, journalist Russell Lord, and organicist Albert Howard, that healthy soil was an integrated community of inorganic and organic elements--gravel, sand, clay, silt, humus, water, microflora, and microfauna. As an early agroecological thinker, Bromfield posited that no single aspect of nature was unrelated; specialization in the extreme led to a dead end. Those who knew how to build, utilize, and maintain fertile soil were those who also knew the path to utopian social constructs. Thus, his thought squared with the notion of changing the environment in order to change people. Social character could be ameliorated through the improvement of the environment. Cooperation with the natural laws

embodied in the concept of fertile soil would therefore yield the harmony he so eagerly sought.⁹

In 1939, Bromfield began his quest to prove that a Jeffersonian way of life could be achieved in a manner that all ordinary farmers could duplicate. On Malabar's varied acres of gullied, worn out, Ohio crop, pasture, and timber land, he meticulously transformed the farm into a showplace of fertility and bounty. He demonstrated, along with his assistants, the characteristics of organic order and intentionality by taking individual responsibility for the healing of the land, something he believed only existed for a short time on the Ohio frontier, until overtaken by foolish, extractive agricultural methods. Bromfield believed that a perfect natural order already existed within the land, but that it had been sabotaged by greedy, misguided, and ignorant techniques of farming. The natural balance had been disrupted, and he intended to restore it by renewing the soil. "Nature herself, if understood and given co-operation, provides the means of health, productivity, abundance, and fecundity. It is when these laws and balances are outraged that we arrive at disease, sterility, and disaster."¹⁰

Bromfield coordinated what was called "The Plan" with his main assistant Max Drake. The first order of business was to stop the soil erosion and heal the gullies. They and some part-time employees hauled tons of topsoil to these washed-out areas, chiefly by means of small tractors with rear-mounted dirt buckets. They also adopted experimental agriculturalist Edward Faulkner's system of "trash farming," especially for the most infertile hillsides. This method of renovation involved disking and/or chisel plowing into the soil liberal amounts of lime, manure, and starter fertilizer, plus the existing vegetation. Lime balanced the acidic and alkaline composition of the soil; manure began the re-creation of humus; up to 400 lbs./acre of 3-12-12 commercial fertilizer enabled quick growth of the newly planted cover crop; and the stalks and roots of the existing vegetation produced natural aeration and channels for water percolation and retention. On established fields, all crop residues and green manures (clovers, alfalfa, and alfalfa/grass combinations) were

incorporated during the Fall, in a kind of sheet composting action by means of repeated diskings or a couple of passes with a chisel plow. The fields of Bromfield's Pleasant Valley soon changed from anemic plots capable of growing only thin grasses and stubborn weeds, to lush swaths of deep green vegetation. People had called these areas "poor or 'worn-out' when in truth they only appear so because the soil is dead--killed by a bad agriculture which ignored the replacement of organic materials either in the form of green manures or of the infinitely more important animal manure."¹¹

Malabar Farm's agriculturalists quickly adopted the waste-fighting methods of the "New Agriculture"--soil conservation techniques, new tillage equipment, soil fertilization and trace elements, and new hybrids, especially in forage crops like nitrogen-fixing alfalfa and high yielding grasses. Bromfield's interest in high quality hay and pasture forages grew when he proposed a grass or sod-based agricultural system. Not only would forage crops largely stop soil erosion, but they would also reduce the concentrated labor requirements involved in the autumn harvest of row crops common on America's farms. This system allowed for more hilly and highly erodable land to return to uses better suited to its productive capacity--forest for the steepest ground and pastures for less steep, but still erodable land. Malabar's farmers reduced erosion on regular cropland too, by not moldboard plowing the residue and exposing bare soil, but by using a chisel plow or field cultivator which ripped through the crop, but did not turn over the soil. The sod was allowed to die and then more or less orthodox methods of seedbed preparation were utilized. This methodology left the soil exposed for a very short period of time before planting. Success use of these techniques showed in increasing yields of wheat, for example. From five bushels the first year, the yield jumped to twenty the next year, to thirty in the third year, and finally to forty bushels in the fourth year.¹²

The Plan also called for a program of diversified farming, including a balance between the production of crops and livestock. Bromfield's dairy herd and beef cattle mainly

subsisted on dry hay, hay silage, and pasture, but very little grain. These fodder requirements allowed for a diversity of landscapes to flourish as well. Bromfield established productive fields, permanent pastures, rank hay fields, and thick woods, where before only sparse vegetation grew. He also planted filter strips along creeks, and he allowed other land to grow up into wildlife areas. In addition, he built ponds, grassed waterways, terraces, and tree-filled drainage outlets. Most of these water-handling designs did their job without the use of underground tiles. Bromfield measured the progress of valley-wide soil and water conservation efforts by observing Kemper's Run, a wild, winding, but clear stream he had played in and around in his youth, but which local farmers had straightened, making it nothing more than an eroded drainage canal. He latched onto a species of willow called *Babylonica* as the means to heal the scar on the land. "Today the little stream is rarely discolored save in corn-planting time" and "the flow has been stabilized." "As the springs throughout the watershed come back to life and flow once more, the game fish and the water vegetation are coming back and watercress actually grows again on the riffles."¹³

The most idealistic part of The Plan was Bromfield's desire for self-sufficiency. To accomplish this, he proposed the proliferation of small-scale projects, including bee hives, goats, sheep, all manner of fowl, and a huge organic garden which yielded so much produce that he needed a roadside stand to sell the surplus. People, impressed with its quality, drove miles out of their way to buy Malabar's produce. Bromfield's philosophy of soil fertility, too, implied that self-sufficiency was possible with the land. Through the use of long-rooted crops like alfalfa and brome grass, "farming from three to twenty feet down" was possible; meaning that these plants would bring up from subsoil depths the basic mineral nutrients necessary for healthy plant growth. Thus fields would be self-renewing if not farmed too intensively. Although there was some scientific data to support his theory on soil fertility, it best illustrated "[his] mystical understanding of farming that defied both rational analysis and

textbook farm economics." Bromfield simply observed Nature, and decided largely on the basis of intuition to mimic its ways as much as possible when acting in the role of farmer.¹⁴

Although Bromfield never gave up on the idea that soil could provide most of its own inputs in the long-term, he did put aside most of the small-scale business projects. Farm manager, Max Drake, convinced Bromfield that he would go broke trying to achieve complete self-sufficiency. Realizing that he could not do it all himself or get enough steady, good help, Bromfield kept the dairy and beef cattle and sold the hogs, chickens, ducks, and most of the other ancillary operations. Even then, Bromfield happily put his many house guests to work preparing vegetables for canning, driving cattle, and stacking hay. Nevertheless, Malabar eventually became a grass and cattle farm--never the self-sufficient farm originally envisioned. Yet Malabar, the most famous experimental farm of its time, remained largely organic; herbicides, pesticides, and large amounts of commercial fertilizer were not used. In addition, Bromfield kept the level of mechanization manageable. Tractors were small and the machinery in general was older and inexpensive, except for the key pieces, like the chisel plows and rotary tillers. In fact, he urged machinery manufacturers to build their field equipment of rugged steel, not cast or gray iron, thus saving farmers countless hours of down time and a large amount of hard-earned cash in broken and bent implements.¹⁵

Soon after the institution of The Plan at Malabar, Bromfield, concerned with the financial insecurity, economic instability, and psychological uncertainty of the times, put into place a cooperative plan for the operation and finances of the farm. It combined aspects of capitalism, social planning, and mild collectivism. Malabar employed four full-time men, and they and their families lived on the farm in rent-free houses. Additionally, the farm provided them with free food, much of it raised on the farm. They received salaries which were above average, and were guaranteed a share in the farm's profits. Bromfield took five percent off the top as payment for his capital investment. Called "The Boss" by everyone

who lived at the farm, Bromfield certainly had the most influence in its administration. His was not the only voice, however, because all the full-time employees contributed their expertise and ideas to the farm's operation and progress. Indeed, Bromfield's top assistant handled most of the day-to-day operations of the farm. But the whole point of Bromfield's endeavor was to align all actions with Nature. Human beings could fix other human's mistakes, but there was no advantage to be gained in taking on Nature. People had created conditions under which good farmers and bad farmers both had lost their land for nonpayment of taxes or mortgages. Almost fixated on the idea of security, Bromfield sought the ultimate in permanency. "Backed by the proper capital, we should never be forced to sell in a bad market in order to pay interest or taxes. We could often enough, be able to deal with the ruinous middleman on our terms and not his."¹⁶

This cooperative venture presupposed the concept of brotherhood, which Bromfield believed to be vital to the survival of agrarian traditions in the tough economic times of the 1930s and the global uncertainties of the 1940s. He looked for ways to help young people get started in farming by counteracting its high capital costs. "We sought a way to operate a big farm without dispossessing families. . . . We sought a way of raising the standard of living of all of us on that farm. . . ." Bromfield adopted a nominal collectivism mixed with free enterprise, with himself as the capitalist. Indeed, not only did he envision a better social and economic order centered on the pastoral small community, but he moved closely to an utopian perspective based on The Plan. The community was Nature personified; Nature was the model of the ideal community. Nature was small in its locality; it was massive and ubiquitous in its totality; it was extremely powerful in all its manifestations. Here Bromfield demonstrated the ideas of justice and fairness, characteristics typical of the utopian concept of brotherhood. However, his literary biographer, David Anderson, characterized Bromfield as becoming more and more like Jefferson's "natural aristocrat," because of Bromfield's role

as leader of the cooperative. Yet, one need not fault Bromfield too much. There is a need for sensitive leaders at most times and in many situations.¹⁷

Bromfield respected the inherent dichotomies of human existence, but he thought too much could easily be made of them. He believed that the creative act involved mind, "heart," and body, especially in the realm of agriculture. The resolution and unification of apparent opposites was the point of rural culture and community. There were no artificial or contrived unities as was necessary with industrial pursuits, in which people shaped the environment to their ends, not the ways of Nature. Bromfield reveled in hand work as well as head work. In his vision and action they blended together as one. Whatever he looked at he tried to envision as a whole, whether it was a landscape, a farm, or a community. "I have worked and suffered . . . in the creation of something . . . --a whole farm, a whole landscape, in which I could live in peace and with pride and which I could share with others to whom it would bring pleasure."¹⁸

Bromfield often merged the material and the spiritual in his thought and writings. In an article written in 1950, entitled "I Live on the Edge of Paradise," he extolled the virtues of the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District--a balanced, multi-use flood control project in central Ohio. A devastating flood in 1913 prompted its construction. It consisted of a series of small upstream dams and catchment basins, which Bromfield agreed were better than a few large dams low on the river plus the usual assortment of levies. He favored government involvement for large projects such as the Muskingum complex. During a period of heavy rains in 1947, the Muskingum reservoirs proved their worth by containing potential floodwaters and minimizing downstream damage. This conservation district also created extensive wildlife habitat which Bromfield predicted would pay for itself through increased tourist spending. His commonsense notion of a rural good place was quite evident when he wrote: "The pattern is there--a pattern which any child can understand. Perhaps it is

too simple and obvious. More likely it is simply not grandiose enough or futile or expensive enough to merit the interest of most of our planners."¹⁹

Part of the paradox of Bromfield's near-utopian thought resided in the simultaneously held desires of achieving a comprehensive unity in a new social order and realizing the benefits of an experimental attitude toward the implementation of the perfect social order. Balance between change and continuity is an issue of paramount importance for any responsible social critic. Planned alterations in the social order can produce extremes of unforeseen change away from the status quo. But Bromfield's brand of agrarian radicalism tended to be of the self-limiting variety. The Plan writ large would have simply shifted the emphases of American culture back toward a pattern which had already existed. In the process, Bromfield would have amended the Jeffersonian rural community with certain modern advances in both knowledge and technology. For example, he believed in scientific agriculture, but wanted it to support his ideal of rural life, not industrial agriculture and its de facto abandonment of the small community. He dared to be different, go against the American grain, and make that difference mean something. He advocated not a political revolution, but a revolution in the relationship of people to places. Although he eagerly accepted the newest in conservation tillage machinery, he rejected the emerging agricultural trends of buying bigger equipment and the latest in automated feeding systems. He kept his farm machinery as simple and small as realistically possible (his Ford Ferguson tractors produced at best thirty horsepower), because he wanted machinery to serve human beings, rather than people serving machines. With respect to technology, he differed little from the positions taken by Agar, Borsodi, and Brownell. Technology would be simply another piece of culture to be managed, but not manipulated, by human beings within the general guidelines set down by Nature. "I believe that one day our soil and our forests from one end of the country to the other will be well managed and our supplies of water will be abundant

and clean. . . . as God and Nature intended, an abundance properly distributed when man has the wisdom to understand and solve such things.²⁰

Bromfield's experimentalism always centered on the natural balance of organically healthy soil. Although he used commercial fertilizer in "emergency" situations, he raged against those who promoted complete dependence on artificial fertilizers, not so much because of that particular technology's undesirability, but because of its promoters' ideology, which considered the soil as a machine, not as a whole, living thing. Bromfield lashed out at businessmen, agriculture professors, and farmers alike who advocated the commercial fertilizer theory, labeling them greedy, impatient, ignorant, and arrogant. In Bromfield's view, they sought an improper "short-cut or a means of outwitting nature." He opted for less than maximum production in return for the maintenance of a living soil community of plants, animals, bacteria, fungi, and inorganic constituents. This community was the main focus of his experimentalism. "Many of the greatest contributions to agriculture in our time have not come from the billion-dollar Department of Agriculture nor from the countless colleges of agriculture but from a county agent or a farmer who had the power to observe, the imagination to speculate and the logic to deduce a process from which vast benefits have developed." Despite these criticisms of what later would be known as agribusiness, he was able to establish some working relationships with an assortment of representatives from fertilizer companies, farm machinery corporations, and land-grant university agriculturalists.²¹

What Bromfield offered was not a revolutionary panacea for all problems, but an essentially conservative pattern for one of the root difficulties of modern times. He thought that the community and that sense of belongingness formerly provided by it were missing from mid-century America. Lack of it produced even more destructive greed, envy, hate, and violence. The soil and landscape of small, local places provided identity and the elusive balance between extreme individualism and complete suffocation of personal autonomy.

People needed homes, not just houses; the land would give that if addressed in the proper manner. While reticent about the details of his ideal community, clearly Bromfield accepted the Jeffersonian view of a community composed of hard-working independent farmers, small shopkeepers, and agricultural villages. Not quite that simplistic or naive, Bromfield realized that cities were here to stay, and were not necessarily innately evil or predatory. The publication of Malabar Farm (1948), a record of the successes and failures of the extensive experimental program he carried out, signaled that he had moved beyond the concept of the farm as a Great Depression-induced security blanket, and viewed it as a place to achieve life-long fulfillment. "In a world and a nation where the opportunities of the Horatio Alger hero become steadily more restricted . . . , the farm is a good place to and . . . to find security [and] satisfaction in living."²²

Believing that the nation was at a crossroads, Bromfield wrote in 1946: "Either we drift on and on into the depressing condition of a corporate state, or we act to establish a redistribution of economic values and continue as a democracy in which the rewards are free enterprise, independence, human dignity, and freedom." Like those who contributed articles for Free America, Bromfield feared that democracy could not survive in a nation so heavily structured by industrialization, urbanization, and centralization. Therefore, he, like them, advocated decentralization of industries and cities, not as a panacea, but as a way to short circuit a system which was building up to a potential catastrophe. Huge agglomerations of people produced weak and ineffective populations who tended to clamor for "'bread and circuses,'" which undercut the discipline and welfare of nations. "It is time to consider doing away with them [cities], simply as a basis of common sense and social and economic security." Bromfield praised the TVA as a superb example of what could be done to develop both industry and agriculture in a state of peaceful coexistence and symbiosis. Industry did not require huge masses of people living in high density urban slums. Thus he looked favorably on the planning then being done for a Missouri Valley Authority. Demobilization

would go smoother and produce more positive repercussions for the future if returning soldiers or disgruntled urbanites could settle on a few acres near a small or medium-sized town and work both at a nearby industry and on their land. "The one activity co-ordinates and guarantees the security of the other and together they provide [them] with economic security and a genuine stake in the economy of the nation." Thus, a modification of the Jeffersonian dream would still be viable and applicable to a nation seemingly in perpetual crisis, uncertainty, and need for security. Bromfield's priorities emerged clearly in two mutually supporting liberties: the "freedom of action" and the "freedom from fear of depressions." The countryside could and should support more people, reducing populations of overburdened cities, and at the same time, introducing more people to the greater independence, stability, and abundance possible in well-managed and ecologically-oriented agrarian communities.²³

Bromfield continued this theme on an international level in his most ambitious socio-economic work, A New Pattern for a Tired World (1954). Similar to the contemporary notion of bioregionalism, he pointed out the need for an economic revolution which would reconstruct balances within major geographical areas of the world along self-sufficient lines. Each area would work within its natural potential, not according to arbitrary standards of financial theory and economic manipulation. Both industrialized and underdeveloped areas could avoid the "great industrial concentrations and the abnormal conditions which breed not only racketeering and vice but the radical and foreign political ideas." He believed that the peace, abundance, and security existing at Malabar Farm could be transferred to the world at large, thus reducing Cold War levels of fear and conflict. The solution was the "decentralization of industry into smaller communities and rural areas where men can own something, have a stake in the nation and have a reasonably normal life for themselves, their wives and their children."²⁴

Whether on the global or local level, Bromfield most admired those people who were "front line" activists; and therefore, he disliked bureaucrats and administrators. In his experience, the most productive people in agriculture were the field men of the Soil Conservation Service, the Triple-A, Farm Security Administration, and the County Extension Service. He had high praise for them and their respect for public service. They, in concert with "good farmers" everywhere, would bring about Louis Bromfield's idealistic rural vision. But other officials at higher levels came in for venomous treatment. He labeled Henry Wallace a "phony farmer and scientist;" "no man in the U. S. has less respect from the farmer." The government's program of farm subsidies did more harm than good. "A subsidized agriculture is necessarily a static agriculture in which . . . subsidies serve mainly to protect and maintain the poor and inefficient farmer or absentee landlord who is always looking toward high prices rather than production per acre to give him economic solidity and prosperity." Farming for the bottom line alone was not farming but the act of a conquerer. As with many outstanding and notable people, life for Bromfield was art, and the good farmer was a kind of artist. He likened the restorer of land to the best of all artists. "The Farmer may leave his stamp upon the whole of the landscape seen from his window, and it can be as great and beautiful a creation as Michelangelo's David, for the farmer who takes over a desolate farm, . . ., and turns it into a Paradise of beauty and abundance is one of the greatest of artists."²⁵

In this vision, farmers played the most important role, the role of caretaker of the land, the human spirit, and the Jeffersonian ideal. Upon these bases then, the community would rest, forever secure in the honor and integrity inherent in the right relationships between soil and farmer. Bromfield was unable to foresee, however, that falling production per acre, the great enemy of the good farmer as he defined it, would be turned around not so much by the type of sustainable agriculture he advocated, but by heavy applications of commercial fertilizer and powerful hybrid seeds. True, soil and water conservation methodology did

spread quickly throughout the country, thus stopping the most serious erosion situations; but, few farmers adopted Bromfield's pastoral, "disturb the earth the least" ideology. Even though many farmers subsequently adopted conservation tillage methods, they still tended to plant fence row to fence row. Yet, he was correct in his judgment that fully diversified farms of the turn of the century were no longer very viable. Some degree of specialization was necessary for making an adequate living, and that practice would benefit the community in the long run, especially if that specialization was based on the competitive advantages of the locale. Bromfield encouraged the labor exodus from farming, seeing that not everyone could be a good farmer and that bad ones tended to drag their communities down with them. But he underestimated the power of mechanization to force farmers off their land, and thus, to depopulate and disrupt their local communities. He had preached his gospel of organic farming and soil conservation to crowds of farmers, scientists, journalists, and assorted visitors from the top of a hill on Malabar Farm dubbed "Mount Jeez;" specifically, he voiced the message that it did not take a fortune to rehabilitate worn out farms--that ordinary farmers without access to large amounts of capital could replicate what he had done at Malabar. In reality, that did not exactly ring true. American farmers did fulfill Bromfield's hope of producing cheap, bountiful food, but they did it largely with a high-powered, highly capitalized agricultural technique dependent on expensive commercial inputs and a significant degree of government intervention. A society full of rural communities based on small, efficient, low-input, organic farms did not evolve, despite his tireless advocacy through such organizations as Friends of the Land, the National Audubon Society, the Ohio Wildlife Commission, hundreds of articles, and countless speeches. His desired rural renaissance failed to materialize, even as the ideas of ecology and low-input, sustainable agriculture were catching on across most of the nation.²⁶

Bromfield and even some of his reviewers knew he was swimming against the tide, for as The Commonwealth's Edward Skillen observed, "To put over a program of such scope and

importance, counter to the dominant commercial farming trend in the United States, is enough to ask of any man." Others were reluctant to extensively criticize his work: speaking of Pleasant Valley, "It is difficult to submit a book like this to cold, critical analysis, for not many, even reviewers, can read very far into its pages without catching something of the author's enthusiasm for a subject which he has *lived*." And ecologist Paul Sears trumpeted that "those who teach science should read it [Out of the Earth] and ask themselves whether, with all of their technical discipline, they have been imparting as broad a view of the interrelations of nature as this gusty layman, Louis Bromfield." But as Russell Lord, a long-time Bromfield admirer noted, some people saw him as an irresponsible anarchist. Worse, others perceived him as a novelist out of his element who simply made facile statements and pontificated with no thought to reality. "Mr. Bromfield's book is a grim warning that the kind of 'thinking out loud' which comes out of the mouths of characters in novels, and in which slovenly speech and slovenly thinking can always be excused on the plea of character delineation, just won't do in a book [A Few Brass Tacks] purporting to tell the public what's what in the world." In the end, Bromfield won to himself more friends than enemies, and some of those supporters even called him the "Sinatra of the Soil" for his unfailing and entertaining advocacy of soil conservation.²⁷

Louis Bromfield initially set out to create a "medieval fortress-manor . . . where a whole community once found security and self-sufficiency." Yet, he admitted that "the vague and visionary idea I had in returning home seems ludicrous and a little pathetic." Despite not finding exactly what he was seeking, "I found something much better--a whole new life, and a useful life and one in which I have been able to make a contribution which may not be forgotten overnight. . . . And I managed to find and to create, . . . a beautiful and rich landscape and the friendship and perhaps the respect of my fellow men and fellow farmers." The passage of time has rendered his emphasis on agricultural sustainability no longer utopian. Conservation tillage systems of today have largely integrated Bromfield's

and Edward Faulkner's practices of mulch and trash farming. Much of the agrarian utopianism of the Jeffersonian vision remains imaginary and untested. Several waves of "back-to-the-landers" have adopted the ideas of appropriate technology, balance between urban and rural environments, semi-self-sufficiency, and home production and consumption. But the cooperative notions of Bromfield, many agrarians, and most small communitarians have languished as desiderata of a very small radical minority. Yet the appeal and attraction of the land and soil has a perennial quality about it and so too do the agrarian ideas of Louis Bromfield.²⁸

Those agrarian ideas, of course, continued on after Louis Bromfield, often simply in the form of testaments to a bygone age of simpler times. But those agrarians who wrote before him, if anything, touted bolder, more optimistic, and more idealistic claims and social models even into the early forties, when Bromfield was just getting started with his "Plan" and just developing his major agrarian theories. Even though they preceded him by only a few years in terms of dates of publication, those earlier agrarians tended to stay with the idea of fully diversified farms, nearly self-sufficient, like those of the early twentieth-century. They saw this as the ideal because it meant, both denotatively and connotatively, stability, prosperity, and the security of a tightly-knit rural community. One such agrarian, journalist Elmer Peterson, in his Forward to the Land (1942), identified the main problem as a lack of national will to pursue environmentally and culturally sound farming practices based on careful diversification of operations, soil conservation, and a willingness to build wealth slowly by reinvesting profits back into farming. He pressed his claim that land should be seen as representing not only "soil, water, forests, grasslands, and wildlife, . . . but also the intelligent use of the earth's produce, and an economic policy that emphasizes direct subsistence from the soil as the starting point." Americans had not lost any of their agrarian ardor; they had simply been misled and seduced by "moneyways," and were only "falsely adjusted to the land. They need to march forward to a new adjustment." People had taken

the wrong track, an incorrect direction in dealing with the problems of agriculture between the world wars. They should "go *forward* to a new soil economy--an economy not found in our pioneering stage or in the painful, Old World man-power farming; or in the Mexican *ejido* or the Soviet collective farm; nor yet in national socialism or the cash crop system that emerged under political benison with special and often disastrous power in the era, 1914-42."²⁹

Like Bromfield, Peterson saw the need for a renewal of the basic agrarian values which he believed underlaid the early successes of the Republic. But with so many farmers dispossessed in the thirties and early forties, and fascism on the march around the world, a sense of crisis and urgency stalked the land and figured prominently in Peterson's assessment of the times. He quoted Oklahoman civic leader Raymond Thomas, who in 1940, said "Total defense against external assault is less difficult than the task of bracing internal strength. Forces from within are attacking our democratic freedom, and we must erect defenses against them as well." Translating that observation to rural culture, Peterson posited that "The nub of the present problem is the conflict between moneyways and soilways--between unscientific mercantile farming and scientific, balanced, decentralized techniques of what is called 'live-at-home farming.'" Basically, he had simply restated the urban-folk community continuum in terms of rural, farming culture. Moneyways for Peterson meant "skimming the cream of the soil," wasteful use of resources, the urge for quick profits, hyper-mechanization, and all the negative characteristics usually attributed to urban populations and systems. Soilways, however, meant "individual free enterprise, preservation of 'the American way,' decentralization, constructive mechanization, . . . intelligent land use, and the adoption of an extremely important cushion against depression cycles." Peterson's words spoke to the continuing fear of a returning depression, adherence to neo-Jeffersonianism, a real faith in conservation (especially soil and water), a belief in the efficacy of decentralization, and the beneficence of the action agencies of the federal government, specifically the Farm Security

Administration (FSA). Essentially, Peterson promulgated what Bromfield reiterated only a few years later, except for their differences on the advisability of self-sufficiency and the utility and necessity of the New Deal in agriculture.³⁰

In keeping with his stated goal, Peterson attempted to construct a rural vision that updated and modernized traditional agrarianism with elements of conservation, diversification, capital infusions from federal agencies, and programs designed to make farm owners out of able tenants. He looked to the FSA as the model organization in much of this re-creation of rural life, not the Works Progress Administration, which he claimed corrupted the work ethic by handing out relief funds indiscriminately and through inattention to long range, permanent settlement and resettlement of the land. His main point was that "FSA tends to put people back on the soil, where they can get their own living most directly and with the least possible economic waste and friction. . . . It would appear that the principle should be broadened to include the entire farm community in principle, so that the live-at-home doctrine will become firmly embedded in the entire farm economy" The FSA rehabilitated farmers on decent land, without unduly controlling them through regulations or saddling them with unrealistic debts. The evidence, Peterson believed, pointed to the clear conclusion that the FSA or a similar agency should continue to help poorer farmers who, through no fault of their own, lost their land, and return them to an independent situation productive of moderate prosperity and relative security. After all, most of these people were honest, hard-working farmers who asked for nothing more than a fair chance and an occasional helping hand to see them through the inevitable downturns in the economic cycle. Peterson and others like him gave government an important role in agriculture. "There may be flaws in the administration of FSA, but the general principle is demonstrably sound, and, as such, deserves to take rank as one of the important achievements of government in a domestic economy." Bureaucrats would be bureaucrats, but in spite of themselves they were still in a good position to help thousands of farmers who would have immediately left the

land or struggled on under marginal conditions. Furthermore, the Jeffersonian vision would not be compromised by this type of government intervention--it would equalize the playing field and the marketplace for the class of farmers who most needed assistance.³¹

As the world became engulfed in war in the forties, even casual observers of the farm scene recognized that commodity prices were rising and would go much higher due to the inordinate demand for food. But Peterson feared inflation, which did not help the poor--it just caused high prices, which they could not afford. Even though he advocated a high degree of self-sufficiency, his acceptance of appropriate mechanization of small farms would leave those farmers vulnerable to high prices for machinery and farm supplies. Greater cash income might be provided by the "Ford ideal [which] is a factory worker in a rural community, owning a small tract of land where, in his spare hours, he may build health and happiness and produce a part of his food and beautify his life, by raising flowers, vegetables, fruits, and perhaps some livestock or poultry." Another of way of keeping people on the land and generating a livable income was through dairying. Peterson lamented the paucity of livestock raising and yearned for the days when every farm without exception had a large array of livestock. Such farmers may never have entered the middle class and experienced the attendant higher standard of living, but there was no need for that in his opinion; they had their land and the inherent stability which it provided. Peterson's agrarianism partook little of the middle class or urban life. Living was theoretically easy in the country, but never in the city. Most importantly, agrarians participated in a more profound wisdom than urbanites could ever imagine. "What this country needs more than anything else is to listen to the voice of rural America." In that voice resided the "deep, quiet, wordless instinct of those who get their living direct from the soil. No professional, political friend-of-the-farmer has any conception of this instinct. It can come only from those who consort with the earth." Peterson buttressed that classic agrarian sentiment with a genuine distributist perspective on the land. Property ownership should be expanded, and with it, the democratic system would

necessarily spread. "Democracy, despite contrary rhetoric of a few high priests in ivory towers, definitely is a way of owning property. Take away property and the aspiration to own it and you will surely destroy liberty." At least for Peterson even as late as 1942, the small agricultural community was not a relic of a bygone past, but a realistic, practical, and viable part of the American social structure; it was more vital to the United States' survival as a true democracy than it ever had been, and if no one wanted to support it, then the federal government should nourish, not dictate or dominate, the natural desire to farm as an independent owner-operator among one's peers.³²

Other concerned agrarians beside Peterson spoke out against what they saw as the degradation of the Jeffersonian vision. One such proponent was Joseph Eaton, director of research for the Rural Settlement Institute. In Exploring Tomorrow's Agriculture (1943), he identified two causal forces then operating in agriculture: technology and the growth of tenancy. Both tended to stimulate change away from the agrarian ideal and the traditional rural community. "Technology has stimulated a farm management system which is conducive to larger holdings and employed labor. The growth of tenancy encourages absentee ownership." In the forward to Eaton's book, director of national extension work M. L. Wilson asked "Do these trends mean that the small independent farmer, such as Thomas Jefferson recognized and whom we today regard as the backbone of our rural society, will disappear?" Eaton sought answers to the growing rural dilemma by researching and outlining a plan for cooperative group farming--what he called a "practical program of rural rehabilitation." He based the study on some of the cooperative corporation farms of the FSA, selected private cooperative farms, the ethnic-religious agricultural communes of the Hutterian Brethren and the Amana Society in Iowa, and miscellaneous resettlement projects inherited by the FSA from the Resettlement Administration.³³

Eaton saw the cooperative group farm, that is, "an association of a number of farm families who operate jointly a large-scale farming enterprise and who equitably share the

returns of their group effort" as a promising solution to rural problems precisely because it had been so completely ignored by mainstream thinkers. Eaton quickly pointed out, however, that because the cooperative idea ran counter to strong traditions and prejudices about private property and individual initiative, its only real chance for success lay with a common religious, moral, or ethical tie to bind the participants together. But he believed it was a genuinely possible objective based on extant examples of rural rehabilitation. In answer to potential criticism that these schemes condemned marginal farmers to continued poverty and a border-line existence, Eaton countered that his program "signifies progress rather than the maintenance of the status quo." Just putting farmers back on their feet was not enough; getting at the root of the problem so that it did not happen again was the unstated goal.³⁴

Eaton proceeded to set forth ten criteria of rural rehabilitation based on rising expectations of rural people as he knew them and rural housing needs based on advice from rural sociologist Carl C. Taylor. Material well-being led the way, including housing with the expected conveniences "such as indoor toilets, running water, hardwood floors, screening, electricity and refrigeration." He also included in the material section luxuries "essential not for subsistence but for the enjoyment of living" such as reading matter, travel, recreation, movies, toys, and music and musical instruments. Second, income should be regular and secure. Third, good working conditions would encompass fair working hours, vacations, safety precautions, and a level of wages high enough to support a farm family at a reasonable level of living without the need to send children to work. Fourth, people required basic kinds of insurance for crops, periods of unemployment, their health, and old age. Fifth, the old Populist demand of economic democracy was resurrected to include equality of bargaining power and equality of control of productive resources. Sixth, people needed health care in the form of medical facilities and "medical care for all who need it, regardless of their ability to pay for it." Seventh, greater access to quality education including library facilities, adult

education, and progressive facilities for rural children. Eighth, Eaton believed ruralites needed facilities for leisure activities, from recreation to education to social activities. Ninth, "security of tenure to enable farmers to become integrated in a locality sufficiently well to come to feel 'at home,' acquire social status, make friends and bring up their children in a stable environment." That is, they needed roots in a community. Finally, they needed opportunities for self-development in terms of economic and cultural advancement possibilities and in "contacts with the larger world." Eaton believed these desires set a progressive and honorable standard of human decency. The standard was ambitious and idealistic but realistic nevertheless, because "it is potentially desired by most American, including rural people in the disadvantaged classes. . . . It is a standard which rural Americans can reasonably expect to attain considering the resources of our country."³⁵

Rightly so, Eaton expressed shock at the impoverished conditions, both physical and mental in which many farm laborers, tenants, and some farm owners lived. Their standard of living was "so low on our scale of the 'ten principles of rural rehabilitation' as to justify its description by the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy as 'below any level of decency.'" Eaton praised the New Deal for lifting farm income, but lamented that it could not do more to achieve urban-rural equality. Structural obstacles tended to thwart moves toward rural rehabilitation. Like the institutional regionalists of the forties, non-regionalists interested in rural resettlement and community realized that the infrastructural requirements of modern agriculture placed roadblocks in the way of capital-poor farmers. Mechanization, high rents and land prices, traditional overproduction, poor land, unscientific farming, speculative farming, and the anachronistic philosophy of rugged individualism often condemned many farmers and their families to marginal lives. Given this unsatisfactory state of affairs, Eaton suggested co-operative corporation farms as providing "an experimental laboratory of agricultural reform." While not panaceas, Eaton claimed this form of agricultural organization held out substantial hope for a nation facing unprecedented levels of change,

mobility, demand on resources, and continuing distress and upheaval among its farming population. He went on to state that FSA-sponsored cooperatives, although having some weaknesses, produced conditions supportive of his ten criteria of rural rehabilitation. Among these benefits, community integrity and strength ranked high. "The settlers have security of tenure and are able to become integrated in the locality," which would provide a stable environment for children, families, voluntary groups, and the entire community.³⁶

Small farmers themselves spoke out calling for a mixed agricultural system which matched farm size to topography. Smaller farms were best suited to the eastern areas of the United States, while larger farms were most appropriate for the West. They also argued that small farms proved their worth during the war by increasing production substantially. They appealed to a modified agrarian sensibility in claiming that small farms were still one of the bases of a secure and free people. Agrarians were on the defensive, not so much because enemies had attacked them, but for reasons of technological advance, economic scales of production, and governmental policies which seemed to encourage large-scale farming. Agrarians, especially dirt farmers, pleaded not to be "plowed under," asking that they be given access to the capital it took to buy the machines to be efficient and be able to compete with the emerging "factories in the fields" (a term popularized by journalist Carey McWilliams in his study of California agribusiness).³⁷

Agrarians viewed agriculture as sick, not only because of the obvious assaults on the soil and the rise of large-scale farms, but due most importantly to the erosion of small farming communities and their associated rural culture. Small farmers P. Alston Waring and Walter Magnes Teller identified the struggle to stay on the land as owner-operators as one that had become a political fight as much as an economic problem. The conflict pitted small versus large farmers and their respective supporters. The contest could only be fought on a fair basis in the halls of Congress and the bureaus of the federal government; only there, believed Waring And Teller, could a level playing field be found. Like Bromfield, Waring

and Teller admitted in Roots in the Earth (1943) that there existed a surplus farm population problem, but also that the time had come to stop the indiscriminate outflow of both bad and good small farmers from agriculture. The winnowing of bad farmers was necessary, but the remaining good small farmers should be retained because they constituted a fundamental part of the system for all the familiar agrarian reasons. "To Thomas Jefferson and our forefathers, individual ownership of the farm by the family operating it was an ideal associated with democracy. Moreover, it has always been the policy of the Department of Agriculture to regard the family farm as important and its retention as necessary. . . . Jefferson's ideal is sound and practical in our twentieth century America, but only if adapted to present conditions."³⁸

Again like Bromfield, Waring and Teller argued that America needed a "permanent agriculture," which would provide the base for a total view of agriculture and lead to the stabilization of farming life in open country communities. They identified "lack of security" as the most nettlesome problem facing small farmers. Indeed, small farmers often chose farming as a way of life because they could reap the fruits of their own labor and live close to the land. But the inherent weather-related riskiness of farming was compounded by market and financial forces beyond the control of the individual. If Jeffersonian agrarianism were to work at all in the modern age, these "artificial" risks would have to be moderated by organizations and institutions large enough to affect widespread change in favor of the small farmer everywhere. Small farmers would do their part in the adjustment to modern times: they would accept enough modern technology to make their lives easier and more productive without creating an unmanageable debt load; they would turn to farmer-owned co-operatives to buy supplies, sell commodities, purchase insurance, and conform to the guidelines of soil conservation districts; they would achieve a balance between production for cash and the home use of produce; and they would heed the advice of federal experts on the need for comprehensive national land-use planning. The authors believed that these changes would

produce a permanent agricultural system which would naturally conserve not only soil and water, but also family farms and rural communities.³⁹

Waring and Teller's ideal of the permanent agriculturalist would exhibit modern scientific concepts about the land, plants, and animals. Ownership of land in fee simple may have been enough in years gone by, but by the forties, efficiency and stewardship went hand in hand, and were the requisite general approaches to farming if small operators expected to stay in business. These authors, like most agrarians of their time, spoke highly of the TVA and soil conservation, especially of Hugh Bennett, founder of the Soil Conservation Service. Soil conservation and the planning ideal it symbolized constituted the leading doctrine of a revitalized agrarianism. Land ownership without a fertile soil was pointless for farmers, so soil conservation became a point of agreement among the many voices in agriculture, and a place to start a movement to stop the replacement of small farms with large ones. Another problem related to the land was that many deserving would-be farmers did not have the capital to acquire it. The authors noted that "Under our traditional methods of land acquisition such individual(s) are almost hopelessly handicapped." In addition, one sure sign that the rural ideal had been compromised in any given locale surfaced "when selling farms is more profitable than farming." In an effort to return profitability to and reduce tenancy in farming, Waring and Teller called for interest rates of no more than two or three percent, plus the chance to make higher mortgage payments in good years and lower ones in poor crop years. Such financial flexibility had been demonstrated by the Federal Land Bank system, but the authors believed the lending institution could have helped more.⁴⁰

Whereas the market-oriented land system worked well enough in the nineteenth century, twentieth-century agriculture was much more of a business and therefore often operated on tighter profit margins; Waring and Teller suggested that farming could use, and was deserving of extra help from the federal government to equalize the chances of success in such a crucial industry as agriculture. The system, they believed, worked against small

farmers at every turn. Thus they called for federal financing of agricultural land. This development would help beginning farmers, capable tenants, and struggling farm laborers as well as current owners to reduce their initial capital requirements along with their continuing overhead. The authors countered the common argument that farmers in the past had paid interest rates of six, seven or even higher percentage figures and still managed to succeed and prosper in many cases, by noting they often did so on virgin land, not on soil worn out or nearly so. "When a small farm is saddled with a 6 percent mortgage, or 5, the mortgagor or the mortgagee suffers and inevitably the land. . . . The sanctity of 6 per cent has helped make American agriculture the most commercial, extravagant and rootless in all history and American farmers the most wasteful in modern times."⁴¹

While speculative land acquisition and absentee farming did not produce vigorous, stable communities, neither did mono-cropping or the abandonment of the practice of home consumption of farm produce. While Waring and Teller did not advocate subsistence farming because it created a standard of living too low to support the vital rural culture they envisioned, they also advised against going to the other extreme of converting all production into cash. In their view, the standard of rural life would best be raised by simultaneously lowering some costs and increasing incomes. More so than Bromfield, Waring and Teller looked toward a more diversified, old-fashioned view of the tame garden--the middle landscape where farm families would make a point of basing more of their consumption directly within the garden, and moderating the influence of the cash nexus. The same idea applied to the level of efficiency and technology small farmers should choose. For example, to cut costs but also partake in a more mechanized harvesting regimen, the authors recommended taking advantage of the benefits of combines and corn pickers, but doing so in a lower cost manner, like through a neighborhood machinery pool or co-operative. "We are not advocating a return to pre-industrial conditions in agriculture. . . . there is a grave danger to ourselves. . . . If we regard technology as simply a way to increase output and lower costs,

with no consideration for whether it shortens hours of work or develops a richer family and community life, then little has been gained."⁴²

Long proposed by leading agrarians, Waring and Teller also took up the cause of co-operation as a leading method by which a permanent agriculture could be developed. Small farmers would find it difficult to farm alone in the more expensive and demanding agricultural times of the war and post-war years. "We small farmers must learn how to co-operate when we buy, when we sell, when we own tools, when we do our financing, and when we plan our land use." The well-known Rochdale principles of co-operative organization constituted the basis for democratic cooperation, because it was based on the "one man, one vote" rule. The final component of a permanent agriculture Waring and Teller found in the perennial ameliorative device of a greater emphasis on quality education for Americans, in this case for rural people and their culture. Co-operative organization was just one aspect of a new rural cohesiveness which progressive education could bring to the country masses. "The older farming community had a homogeneity of its own which no longer exists. . . . We are at loose ends. We have lost our center, our self-sufficing community life, which after all was built within a narrow and circumscribing horizon. . . . But the basic trend of our age is toward community and away from isolationism." The "new farmers" would construct the new permanent agriculture by creating schools which would initiate a new generation of children into the joys, pride, mysteries, and potential associationism of farming, "rather than be lured into near-by towns and factories;" these farmers would create communities containing the advantages of the cities and more "after their own fashion, and they will bring their own reward and their own contentment."⁴³

The war years saw the FSA under pressure to curtail most of its resettlement activities, especially its co-operative programs, and government sponsored community programs suffered. For Waring and Teller, those events pinpointed the forces and trends which seemed to conspire against small farmers and their lifestyle. To the authors, the FSA represented the

best friend the small farmer ever had. So, "Farmers must free themselves from the grip of finance capital and encourage the government to become in reality an instrument of the people, placing human needs above the needs of those who profit from exploitation." Farmers should also realize that people, rural or urban, were the potential allies of the small producer of agricultural goods, and that both producers and consumers had responsibilities to each other to see that both sets of people were satisfied and prosperous. Waring and Teller wanted no limits on production, because such restraints inevitably hurt the small farmer. Yet, they wanted consumers to accept having to pay a fair price for food and fiber, a price productive of a reasonable standard of living for farmers. Another area of public responsibility lay in the care and use of all natural resources, including soil and water. Private ownership of land could successfully coexist with an increased governmental role in the control of resources. Waring and Teller looked to the only power left which was "great" enough to counter the growing forces of commercial farmers, agribusiness, the Farm Bureau, and their allies in Congress. The federal government, especially the USDA, "should free itself from domination by large-farmer interests," provide for "easy and long-term credits" for all farmers, and "protect both consumers and small farmers from monopoly control of warehousing by the erection of government warehouses in all great metropolitan markets." Coupled with that, small farmers should "renounce in part their old unsocial individualism, and undertake every form of co-operative effort" Thus, within this partnership between small farmers and the federal government, Waring and Teller envisioned the seeds of a new dynamic balance for all farmers and their rural community life.⁴⁴

For southern community activists Jean and Jess Ogden, the governmental component of a communitarian partnership meant a greater involvement by the states. In this case, the Extension Division of the University of Virginia funded their studies of "citizen programs at work" which appeared in Small Communities in Action (1946). These stories of community action were first published in the University of Virginia's "New Dominion Series," the

purpose of which was to "stimulate communities, particularly in Virginia, to attack their own problems and find solutions through the thinking and working together of those whose lives were directly affected." The Ogdens presented seventy-two examples of their research between 1941 and 1945. They believed that each story demonstrated the best of the democratic way of problem-solving and represented techniques which any community could use to its advantage. The Ogdens were cognizant of the pessimism which abounded during the war years due to the rise of dictatorships, totalitarian regimes, and the undemocratic use of authority. Thus, they hoped that their reports "might relieve the weight of pessimism enough to encourage a few more 'experimental approaches to democratic living.'"45

Encouraged by the great interest shown in community organization during and after the war, the Ogdens nevertheless eschewed claims of foolproof revitalization plans or miraculous panaceas. "At the moment community organization and community planning are being widely discussed. In too many places the terms are regarded as the new white magic that will change the world." They pointed to the fact that locales were too varied to be covered by one principle. The South, for example, was "admittedly poor," but the diversity of its poverty could easily frustrate attempts at amelioration. Some people lived in desperation, while other places exhibited no acute problems or threat to their very existence. But before the South could tap its potential resources, "attitudes of the people whose lives are involved must undergo a change."⁴⁶

The Ogdens found one such collection of people in the small farming community of Big Lick, Tennessee. Fifty families scratched out a living on cut-over land in the Cumberland Plateau. With some annual incomes slipping to as little as \$40 during the Depression, the only viable community institution, the church, took the lead in trying to bring the community together in order to help itself. Between 1935 and 1938, the minister organized the building of a church, parish house, and a health center with the help of donated materials and labor contributed by members of the community. Yet the minister realized the

community had not come together on a permanent basis but in an ad hoc manner. He observed that they "were still a 'collection of families, inter-related and interdependent by necessity rather than a community of families working together for mutual betterment by choice.'" He had heard of the study club method used in Nova Scotia with some success, so he started two clubs locally. Rather than direct the clubs himself, the minister urged that each group develop their own leadership. The groups explored possibilities for increasing income involving building up the cattle industry and starting a local co-operative. The cattle scheme required too much capital so both groups focused on the "simple plan of pooling limited resources." In light of resistance to the word "co-operative," it was not used in the name of the new group. The Farmers' Association at first purchased various farm implements including a grain drill, lime spreader, tractor disk, corn planter, and so on. Membership fees and rent paid on the equipment provided further capital for the acquisition of a sawmill and small planing mill to utilize the small amount of remaining harvestable timber. Success in the machinery project stimulated interest in areas of additional needs. In order to foster greater stability and continuity in the community, local leaders developed a homestead plan by which to place deserving young families on some of the undeveloped land surrounding the village. Steady repayment of the low-interest loans built the common fund beyond its initial value, and community improvements were made with the accrued interest. Additional projects such as the purchase of a community forest and establishment of a credit union proceeded successfully, but subsequent plans were slowed by the departure of most of the leaders into the military. Perhaps in response to the manpower situation, the community applied to the TVA for inclusion in a soil conservation demonstration program.⁴⁷

The Ogdens observed communities not only planning for making better livings, but also for health and social well-being. They noted, however, that in this area of community life in particular, they encountered the most resistance by villagers to the advice of public health "experts." Attitudes toward the health of women and children manifested the greatest

inertia to change, but programs in food preservation received the greatest acceptance. After a slow introductory period of about one year, do-it-yourself food preservation utilizing community facilities in Habersham County, Georgia, increased dramatically. Eight years after its founding in 1935, by a local vocational agriculture teacher, the success of the program led to supplying local markets with surplus produce, including meat, and shipments even to the armed forces. Located at the local high school, the processing center grew from an initial quick-freezer-locker plant combination, to one that offered a cannery, a fifty-bushel capacity dehydrator, a flour mill, and a sweet-potato-curing building. Beginning with a loan for demonstration purposes from the TVA, the initial money purchased a small walk-in refrigeration unit for curing meat. The locker plant added on a number of times and chilled 80,000 pounds of meat in 1943. In addition to general oversight of the facilities, high school teachers prepared bulletins on proper food processing techniques. Canning remained popular, despite the addition of freezing units. Many people willingly tried a new dehydrator installed in 1942, because they ran out of canning supplies. Local farmers increased their poultry flocks through the use of a feed grinding mill complete with directions on how to best utilize home grown feeds. The school agriculture classes further aided these farmers by operating five incubators providing more than 13,000 chicks. Most importantly for the community, all the facilities were available on a cash or payment in kind basis. All cash fees or payments in produce were funneled through the community in one way or another. As the Ogdens observed, "This center not only is a pioneer in its field but also is one of the most complete in the Southeast."⁴⁸

In their celebration of community renaissance, the Ogdens eagerly pointed out that although local democracy meant many things, it always involved participation by as many people as possible in both planning and implementation of programs. The lesson from Fluvanna County, Virginia, demonstrated that local governmental officials often were instrumental in the success of community betterment projects, and that any initial resistance

on their part often melted away when they became aware of widespread popular support. School teachers had formulated plans for a community canning center based partly on an anticipated building grant from the county supervisors. The project went forward in 1944, but came to a halt when they refused to allocate the amount of \$1,800. The teachers realized they had failed to adequately explain the project to both the supervisors and people of the community, thus resulting in a disconnection between the official decision-making process and the extensive grassroots support known to the program's leaders. So they launched an informational and educational campaign disseminating the facts and calling for citizens to send postcards to their supervisors urging a reconsideration of the decision. Teachers even went door-to-door in an effort to widen their base of support. With hundreds of cards pouring into the courthouse and fifty supporters at the next Board of Supervisors meeting, the officials, heartened and impressed by such advocacy from the people, appropriated the funds without any qualms. In the first summer of operation, the center served approximately one-third of the families in the entire county. In a country where the tradition of the frontier had little relevance anymore but the old myth of rugged individualism was still strong, this type of collective local action represented, to the Ogdens and others, the most potent and realistic expression of freedom and democracy in a developing mass society.⁴⁹

Community life obviously involved more than getting a living, providing for health, and participating in the polity. As the Ogdens termed it, "living a more abundant life" meant "translating material gains into cultural and spiritual gains," not necessarily by way of "acquiring new ideas and ways of doing," but by "integrating past and present and of using both as a basis on which to build the finest possible present and future." As an example of "handing on their heritage," the Ogdens drew attention the theatrical efforts of the people of Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Beginning in the mid-1930s, the citizens, as part of their efforts to cater to a growing tourist trade in the Appalachians, started putting on plays instructive of how old-timers used to live in cabins and shacks in the mountains and hollows. Developing

out of the dramatic presentations of an area weaver's guild, local people wrote, produced, and acted in their own play called Store Britches, which ran during a newly established summer theater. Two sets of cast members first performed the play in 1939, with proceeds going to the community. The annual event continued through 1942, despite losses in both the cast and the tourist trade due to the war. The Ogdens were optimistic that with the end of the war, the acting group would continue and "perhaps by that time they will have a full repertory of local folk plays."⁵⁰

Not only the Ogdens but many other community observers noted that the implementation of more complex or continuing programs of community development often required a permanent locus of community planning and leadership. For years, community advocate Arthur Morgan had touted the community council as an effective device for focusing on particular community needs, and then organizing projects based on specific problems. The Ogdens too, recognized the need for these groups, but found great diversity in function, structure, durability, and importance given to councils by local people. Even some councils which ceased to exist created success in that they spawned programs which continued to act. The Ogdens preferred that the term "community council" be used to designate a group composed of representatives of social agencies, community organizations, professional groups, labor unions, and unattached citizens. They portrayed the ideal community council as one which boasted the broadest citizen representation possible, coupled with close working relationships with leading elected officials. This arrangement would tend to build-in a basis for cooperation between government and the citizenry. The Ogdens pointed to the success of the Georgia Fact-Finding Movement, a state-wide citizens' council, in bringing concerns of ordinary citizens to the attention of its legislators. Nevertheless, no one organization or group could claim to address all issues and solve all problems. However, the greatest stumbling block to the success of community councils lay in their "inability to move from the study to the action phase of a program." In any case,

communities continued to change, with or without the oversight of community councils, and "have the obligation to make that evolution a conscious process planned by the people whose lives are affected."⁵¹

The Ogdens believed that the small community constituted the foundation of American democracy, and that freedom developed when it was "possible for every individual to become the kind of person who can *without fear* help to guide change in the direction found most desirable by those whose lives it will affect." Average communities could be found anywhere, but "good communities" existed where people actively worked together to build a better life in the present and future. "That community is good which sees life in the round--which thinks of beauty and philosophy as highly as it does of efficiency and makes as adequate provision for their pursuit. . . . The acid test of any step a community may contemplate is whether it gives increasing scope 'even unto the least of these.'"⁵²

Like the interest shown by the Ogdens in small Virginia and southern Appalachian places, other communitarian observers focused intently on the South and its rapidly changing post-World War II society. One such ruralist, Vanderbilt University sociologist Wayland Hayes, while not such an ardent and explicit egalitarian as Jean and Jess Ogden, certainly exhibited a love and concern for the welfare of the small community. His book The Small Community Looks Ahead (1947) relied heavily on research by the Ogdens and information provided by the TVA. Manifesting a tone of part social scientific objectivity and part agrarian tradition, Hayes reiterated some of the same arguments of most ruralists before him. Namely, small communities contributed a fundamental segment of the nation's morals, beliefs, and values. "Much of the integration, organization, and stability of America comes from . . . Main Street." In addition, he believed he saw a backlash against the metropolis which would enable small places to regain a larger role in American society. "Recently, there has been a reaction to bigness and the tendency for small businesses, small industry and small communities to assert themselves is becoming more pronounced." Although the

"renaissance of small communities" witnessed by Hayes varied from state to state in its intensity and causes, "all [such examples of progress] indicate a quickening of local responsibility and a revitalization of democracy at the roots." Hayes implied that the old boosterism of past times was inadequate for the challenges of a modern society. "The seriousness and complexity of such problems as full employment, minority group relations, adjustment of veterans, and conservation of dwindling natural resources, are forcing many communities to face their difficulties in a realistic manner and to plan for optimum local development."⁵³

For Hayes, the experience and nature of community mattered more than the physical form or structure of a place. Thus, he rejected the idea of rigidly defining small communities as small places with highly functioning primary groups because of the fact of increasing geographic mobility in modern society. He did, however, approve of social scientist Lloyd Cook's definition: "a population aggregate, inhabiting a contiguous territory, integrated through common experience, possessing a number of basic service institutions, conscious of its local unity, and able to act in a corporate capacity." A mature community demonstrated self-reliance and exhibited an awareness of itself. So for Hayes, "a small community is one which may be comprehended by a large proportion of its people through direct experience." Community size was not the operative factor; internal cohesion made communities. Under this definition, Hayes believed that this phenomenon happened in places with less than 50,000 people, but usually many fewer than that.⁵⁴

Small communities were important to Hayes for two main reasons and both reflected the ruralist, agrarian background with which he worked. One half of the nation's population lived in small communities, including open country communities, villages, towns, and small cities. He repeated the old argument that those places reproduced the nation's humanpower. Urban places fell short of maintaining their populations, while rural areas continued their traditionally high fertility rates. The other reason involved decentralization, which Hayes

believed was catching on across the country. Small communities would likely increase in number, size, and importance. But many of them were behind the times in most measures of welfare and development. Hayes approvingly quoted Lewis Mumford's dictum: "only a handful of people in any age are its contemporaries. Only sluggishly do the masses of people respond to the currents that are sweeping through the ruling classes and the intellectually elite." In general, small communities would be woefully unprepared for their new responsibilities. "Planning must therefore to a large extent attempt to 'take up the lag' or close the gap which separates the best contemporary thinking and most progressive social practices from those which characterize most American small communities."⁵⁵

Social planners needed to raise the awareness of such places and the resources and possibilities within their reach. Only then could citizens of small communities defend themselves against the inevitable problems and pressures created "by the uneven cultural development and imperfect application of modern technological devices." Hayes feared the consequences of inadequate adjustment to cultural lag; he perhaps melodramatically referred to them as "social disintegration or chaos." Although a democrat, he assigned a greater role in this hoped-for transformation to strong leaders and the intelligentsia than did the thoroughly egalitarian Ogdens. "Unless the enlightened ideas and social outlook of the elite can be translated into the thinking and practice of the masses--especially in backward small communities--widespread disorganization is likely to ensue."⁵⁶

Change was a post-war fact of life for all communities, not just small ones. But such changes could do more damage than good in small places because they had fewer reserves from which to draw. Evidence from Middletown indicated changes in material things proceeded easier than did alterations in beliefs and social structures. In addition, Hayes concluded from the experience of World War II that both technological processes and social processes could go forward apace and perhaps needed to progress quickly together in the future. Indeed, "the emergence of an atomic age that is destined to alter men's material

environment much more radically than the steam engine and its host of allied inventions ever did," called for intensive and advanced cultural planning just to maintain momentary societal equilibrium. To compensate for this apparent imbalance, Hayes suggested the near-institutionalization of motivational and educational devices to create the foundations of dynamic communities. Forums, panels, workshops, councils, and study groups could all generate the enthusiasm for change and awareness of problems necessary for subsequent action. But "We must not forget that the elite, if any, cannot shoulder the planning process alone. Planning . . . [is] a process of learning; and the degree to which knowledge is diffused is a forecast of the outcome."⁵⁷

In this regard, Hayes pointed to the planning process used by the TVA as his ideal. Although he still thought that the primary purpose of the TVA was whole community development even when it had become obvious that electric power production had become its central function, the methods used by the TVA to enter communities and work toward their improvement were still valid. Usually the TVA was invited into locales by groups already active in community rebuilding or it contacted acknowledged local leaders in attempts to set up demonstration projects. The story of Few's Chapel, Tennessee, exemplified the extent and success of TVA involvement in a community which perceived some of its problems and invited the TVA to help. It sent farm and home agents to attend local meetings, many sponsored by a men's church group which had already brought to fruition a few improvement projects such as rebuilding a small school building and working with the County Highway Commissioner to secure a new hard-surfaced road. TVA personnel and local people drew up an inventory of community resources, a list of problems, and a program of tentative solutions. From the initial meetings in 1939, came a list of goals which expanded to include a whole range of topics important to an agriculturally-based people. This list included: increases in fertilizer usage, especially lime and phosphate on legumes in rotation with corn; changes in crops and amounts planted, including a reduction

in row crops, increases in small grains, cover crops, legumes, and corn for ensilage in trenches; greater use of soil conservation methods, particularly terraces, even on hillside pastures; increase in the practice of silviculture and commercial forest products; increasing the number of fowl and milk cows per farm; the erection of sheds to protect seeds, tools, and supplies; increasing the size and productivity of gardens, fruits, and berries; improving residential areas by painting houses, seeding lawns and planting shrubs, protection of wells and springs from pollution, screening of windows and sealing of floors to prevent drafts; increased usage of local health facilities; and increased participation in local civic, electoral, and social events. Three years later, the TVA documented substantial progress toward these goals.⁵⁸

Not all the projects undertaken by the TVA were so successful, but Hayes believed they were generally more effective than other approaches because they "emerge from a grass-roots basis rather than be[ing] imposed on the community by a few zealous leaders." Financial support was provided only after local communities demonstrated a capacity to carry plans forward and sustain them over the long-run. The future of small communities would involve, Hayes believed, a further breaking down of isolation and increasing pressure to change. Such a time of change required not an effort to maintain the status quo or a search for stability, but a greater activism, especially at the level of locales, because the real roots of problems were more likely to be addressed there, than the treatment of symptoms which usually passed for community organization in larger, urban areas. This commitment to cultural amelioration of small communities by all institutions from religious to educational "must become a part of the pattern of community life. It must become entrenched in the little places which are the nurseries of the Great Society. Thus, the future of small communities will largely be determined by the adjustments which are made by the agencies that impinge upon them and intervene in their lives."⁵⁹

Not all proponents of communities on the land were as optimistic as the Ogdens or as pragmatic as Hayes; the blunt realism of journalist and social critic Carey McWilliams (1905-1980) in his Ill Fares the Land (1942) was enough to keep all agrarians honest and sober in their reflections. In a tract otherwise about migrants and migratory labor in the United States, McWilliams hinted at what his ideal agrarian community would look like. McWilliams had chronicled the horrific story of migratory labor in California during the Depression in Factories in the Field (1939) and reprised his critique of industrial agriculture and followed the story of agricultural strikes and struggle during the forties in Ill Fares the Land. He called for a peoples' democracy and an end to the consolidation of farm units. His radical populist message bristled with negative characterizations of the agricultural system that caused increasing proletarianization of the rural population, loss of economic independence and status, instability and insecurity, increases in debt and tenancy, and promotion of the idea of continuous expansion and concentration by large corporate interests. McWilliams concluded that democracy was threatened, and that even though the Farm Security Administration (FSA) co-operative farms might be part of a solution, the ruling powers would not let such schemes succeed. The agri-industrial order was run by and for a small group of people to the detriment of the many.⁶⁰

McWilliams could not hide his approval of federal government action to help the agriculturally dispossessed form rural communities. In fact, he implied that it was the only institution powerful enough to make the dramatic changes necessary. "Until the masses of the people actually get possession of the reins of power, both economic and political, they will not be able to create a democratic nonexploitive economic order." Speaking of the successful programs for settlement of migrants run by the FSA in the bootheel region of Missouri, McWilliams noted that the "importance of the projects consists in the fact that they point the way for a much larger program which will have to be devised to meet the problem of displacement in other areas in the South." Left unsaid was that only the government could

possibly undertake such a comprehensive program, because only it had the resources and the centralized authority needed to redress "the unequal position which obtains between social classes engaged in production." Until the power of the rural ruling class was "broken, controlled, or counterbalanced in some manner, the basic cause of the present-day paradox of scarcity in the midst of abundance, of technical advance making for riches to one group and poverty to another, of expanding agricultural production and increasing rural retrogression, cannot be squarely met."⁶¹

McWilliams cited a number of types of agricultural labor housing and settlement types administered by the FSA including migratory labor camps, permanent farm-laborer homes, subsistence homesteads, and full-time, permanent family farms featuring government supervised and planned farming regimens. But McWilliams found most appealing the large-scale co-operative farms run on an experimental basis by the FSA. The FSA started a co-operative farm corporation on 3,607 acres at Casa Grande, Arizona, in 1936. It and a similar farm at Mineral King, California, produced profits after only a few years of operation. While the government retained ownership of the land, all the other assets were owned by a corporation, whose stockholders were also the operators of the farm. Government planners constructed the operators' residences in the fashion of a European village, rather than in scattered units, to provide a greater degree of physical and psychic unity to each community. McWilliams reported that the living standards were substantially higher than their residents' previous levels, and that significant savings were achieved in the construction of the village over the cost of an equal number of separate farmsteads. The co-operative farms ran diversified operations and they each employed a professional manager.⁶²

Another alternative to common farm labor or tenancy was the part-time co-operative farm, as envisioned by the FSA. The FSA promoted the goal of co-operative subsistence farming on farms much smaller than the full-time co-operatives. It operated two such farms in Arizona, one at Chandler and one at Camelback of 197 acres and 310 acres respectively.

The residences were "part of a modernly planned community." Families were given the chance to raise a part of their food requirements and still accept external employment. "As a means of decasualizing migratory farm workers and improving their real wages, the part-time co-operative farm is one of the best remedies yet devised by the ingenious officials of the FSA."⁶³

McWilliams further proposed direct government involvement in the construction and operation of agricultural processing plants, believing them to be able of showing profits equal to privately owned facilities, assuming the use of the best available equipment and most efficient management. For example, he advocated a sugar beet factory: "I should like to see what such a government-operated factory could return, by way of a money income, to sugar-beet growers and sugar-beet workers." He hoped that the successful government operation of these kind of enterprises would rebuild the "agricultural ladder" by which qualified and deserving workers could rise from laborer to tenant to full farm owners as was the tradition in the past. Furthermore, "experiments of this type should, most emphatically, be undertaken by the federal government. State and local units of government, as the experience of the Non-Partisan League in the Dakotas demonstrated, are not capable of initiating such projects." However, McWilliams did not believe it necessary to go as far as the nationalization of all farmland, as Charles Abrams advocated in his Revolution in Land (1939). Social control of the land was legitimate in a highly interdependent society, and its goals could be achieved through land-use planning.⁶⁴

Of all the small community advocacy groups, the agrarians tended to be the least starry-eyed and the most practical. Perhaps being more tightly bound to the organic cycles of farming they remained more reserved in their proposals and their prognostications for success. Their greatest difference lay in the agent of agrarian renaissance. For Bromfield, it was the good farmer, who used modern farming methods to work with nature in reproducing genuine rural communities. Waring and Teller exhorted small farmers to band together and

take their message to the halls of Congress. Likewise, Carey McWilliams saw the federal government as the only recourse in an otherwise losing battle. The Ogdens, however, identified institutions like universities and their extensions services as the ideal agencies of rural change. For Wayland Hayes it was TVA-like organizations with their comprehensiveness and astute leadership which would make the difference in rural communities. Yet, all of them recognized that some rural services would have to be consolidated, that cooperation among a variety of people and institutions were necessary for optimum change, and that the federal government could provide some degree of benefits and help when utilized in moderate amounts. Additionally, very small villages would likely experience decreasing viability, whereas larger towns of between 1,000 and 10,000 people would become more central in the lives of rural Americans because they offered more of the goods and services which were becoming important to people in the post-war era. Finally, most agrarians realized that farming would employ a smaller number of people in the future due to mechanization and economies of scale. But at the same time, they believed that a place existed for small farmers, and that their numbers could remain high if they closely connected themselves to their local communities. Agrarianism was far from dead in the period from 1940 to 1960, but its advocates had accepted the necessity of inevitable compromises and adjustments to a rapidly changing world which no longer recognized agriculture as the preeminent industry or vocation. Perhaps most importantly, agrarians "gave the boot" to the ideal of rugged individualism, because, myth or not, it no longer proved advantageous for farmers to remain separate from their fellows and their communities; isolated places were materially and spiritually impoverished places. But for the most part, they rejected agribusiness farming which attended the rise of mass society, and stood firmly in favor of medium-sized family farms and such co-operative endeavors which would also support small rural communities.⁶⁵

NOTES

1. Clifford B. Anderson, "The Metamorphosis of American Agrarian Idealism in the 1920s and 1930s," Agricultural History 35 (October 1961): 182-188; P. Alston Waring and Walter Magnes Teller, Roots in the Earth: The Small Farmer Looks Ahead (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), 34; Wayland J. Hayes, The Small Community Looks Ahead (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1947), 114; Herman C. Nixon, "Government of the People," in Cities Are Abnormal, ed. by Elmer T. Peterson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 175; Baker Brownell, The Human Community (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 95.
2. David D. Anderson, Louis Bromfield (New York: Twayne, 1964), 15-16.
3. Louis Bromfield, Out of the Earth (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 296; Louis Bromfield, A Few Brass Tacks (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), 172.
4. Anderson, Louis Bromfield, 78-154; Charles E. Little, ed., Louis Bromfield at Malabar: Writings on Farming and Country Life (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988); David D. Anderson, "Louis Bromfield's Myth of the Ohio Frontier," Old Northwest 6 (1980): 63-74; Louis Bromfield, "I Live on the Edge of Paradise," Saturday Evening Post 222 (March 11, 1950): 22-23. For the concept of the middle landscape see Leo Marx, The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). For a positive review of Bromfield's agroecological thinking, but a largely negative glance at his philosophical and utopian stance, see Randal Beeman, "Louis Bromfield versus the 'Age of Irritation'," Environmental History Review 17 (Spring 1993): 77-92.
5. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 299; See Louis Bromfield's The Farm (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1933) for his thinly veiled autobiographical fictional account of rural society in the Ohio country.
6. Bromfield, The Farm, dedication, x, 69, 59.
7. *Ibid.*, 181-182, 177.
8. *Ibid.*, x.
9. *Ibid.*, x; Louis Bromfield, "The Task Before Us," Audubon 55 (January 1953): 20-22; For Bromfield's admiration of Sir Albert Howard see Russell Lord, The Care of the Earth

(New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 318. One of Howard's most important works is An Agricultural Testament (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1940).

10. Mark Hoy, "The Most Famous Farm in America," Audubon 91 (November 1989): 64-67. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 95.

11. Little, 27-41; Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 61-82, 95; Edward Faulkner, Plowman's Folly (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943).

12. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 13-58, 59, 60.

13. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 120-122.

14. *Ibid.*, 99-112; Little, xv.

15. Anderson, Louis Bromfield, 161; Hoy, 66; Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 263-269; Ellen Bromfield Geld, The Heritage: A Daughter's Memories of Louis Bromfield (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1962), 81-84, offers the most perceptive and best reasons for her father's abandonment of the quest for self-sufficiency.

16. Anderson, Louis Bromfield, 127; Hoy, 66; Little, xvi, 27-41.

17. Little, 35-36; Anderson, Louis Bromfield, 127.

18. Hoy, 67.

19. Bromfield, "I Live on the Edge of Paradise," 94.

20. Bromfield, A Few Brass Tacks, 11; Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 297-300; Little, xvii-xix; Louis Bromfield, Pleasant Valley (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1945), 300.

21. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 14-17, 5, 88.

22. Louis Bromfield, Malabar Farm (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1967), 405.

23. Louis Bromfield, "To Clear the Dross," in Cities Are Abnormal, ed. Elmer T. Peterson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946), 198, 197, 196.

24. Louis Bromfield, "Our Great Stake in Agriculture," Vital Speeches of the Day 11 (May 15, 1945): 470; Louis Bromfield, A New Pattern for a Tired World (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).

25. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, 299; Bromfield to Russ, June 20, 1947, folder--Bromfield, Louis, box 20, MSS #364, Friends of the Land, Ohio State Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio; Bromfield, Malabar Farm, 7.

26. Bromfield, Out of the Earth, x-xi; Hoy, 67; Beeman, 86.

27. Edward Skillen, review of Out of the Earth, by Louis Bromfield, in The Commonweal 52 (April 28, 1950): 73-74; Myles W. Rodehaver, review of Pleasant Valley, by Louis Bromfield, in Rural Sociology 10, no. 4 (December 1945): 441-442; Paul Sears, review of Out of the Earth, by Louis Bromfield, in the New York Herald Tribune Book Review, April 2, 1950, 5; Russell Lord, "Louis Bromfield, Pamphleteer," Saturday Review of Literature 29 (June 22, 1946): 17; review of A Few Brass Tacks, by Louis Bromfield, in the New York Herald Tribune Weekly Book Review, July 7, 1946, n.p.; Beeman, 87.

28. Bromfield quoted in Little, 221. Many books appeared in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s which proposed various "looks" at getting back to the land including Helen and Scott Nearing, Living the Good Life (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), Bradford Angier, One Acre and Security (New York: Random House, 1972), and Gene Logsdon, Homesteading (Emmaus, Pennsylvania: Rodale Press, 1973).

29. J. N. Darling, forward to Foreward to the Land by Elmer T. Peterson (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1942), vii; Peterson, Forward to the Land, xiii.

30. Peterson, Forward to the Land, xv.

31. *Ibid.*, xv, 66, 65.

32. *Ibid.*, 181, 262, 276.

33. M. L. Wilson, forward to Exploring Tomorrow's Agriculture by Joseph Eaton (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1943), x, xiii-xvi.

34. Eaton, xiii, 4.

35. *Ibid.*, 4-8.

36. *Ibid.*, 19, 60, 183.

37. P. Alston Waring and Walter Magnes Teller, "The Small Farmer Seeks a Place in the Sun," New York Times Magazine (March 12, 1944): 18-19; Ayers Brinser, "Don't Plow Us Under," Harper's 190 (June 1945): 665-672; Carey McWilliams, Factories in the Fields (Boston: Little, Brown, 1939).

38. Waring and Teller, Roots in the Earth, 28.

39. Ibid., 1-5.
40. Ibid., 38, 39.
41. Ibid., 40, 41.
42. Ibid., 41-44, 46-47.
43. Ibid., 48, 52, 53; P. Alston Waring, "Democracy--Country Style," Free America 6, no. 6 (June 1942): 8-11.
44. Waring and Teller, Roots in the Earth, 190, 195; P. Alston Waring and Clinton S. Golden expanded the coalition to include labor unions in Soil and Steel: Exploring the Common Interests of Farmers and Wage Earners (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947).
45. Jean and Jess Ogden, Small Communities in Action (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), xi, xii.
46. Ibid., xv, 1.
47. Ibid., 3, 4, 5-7.
48. Ibid., 77-82.
49. Ibid., 102-106.
50. Ibid., 143, 144-149.
51. Ibid., 187-224, 233.
52. Ibid., 234, 235.
53. Hayes, 3, 4.
54. Ibid., 6, 9.
55. Ibid., 23-24, 25.
56. Ibid., 26.
57. Ibid., 59, 89, 105.
58. Ibid., 123-127

59. Ibid., 205-225, 226.
60. Carey McWilliams, Ill Fares the Land (Boston: Little, Brown, 1942), 388-390.
61. Ibid., 389, 294, 388.
62. Ibid., 367-371.
63. Ibid., 371.
64. Ibid., 372-374.
65. Earl H. Bell and Florence B. Kandiner, "Emerging Rural Communities," Free America 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1945): 15-17.

CHAPTER 7

INDIVIDUAL APPROACHES TO THE SMALL COMMUNITY

Participants in what had become, by the mid-forties, an identifiable small community movement brought to the discourse a myriad of philosophic backgrounds, which while diversifying the community "mix," sometimes divided the communitarians more than united them, or remained more significant than the small community ideals themselves, and thus contributed to personal quarrels, competition between leaders, and a lack of common purpose. For example, in 1951, two powerful voices for the small community had a falling out over their former Marxist affiliations. Sociologist and back-to-the-lander Scott Nearing accused novelist and newly converted small-towner Granville Hicks of spreading hatred and misinformation in the latter's break with the Communist Party and its ideology, which Hicks called the "communism I now hate." Hicks' abjuration of that brand of militancy and its authoritarian overtones elicited Nearing's recrimination: "Why do you add to the tidal wave of self-destruction which is overwhelming mankind?" Nearing cited several texts including sociologist Pitrim Sorokin's Altruistic Love to show that radical socialism was still compatible with the love of humankind. The two authors ceased their correspondence in 1953, and proceeded to live out very different versions of small community life. Hicks became a recognized figure in the movement; Nearing never really attempted to be part of it and sustained a stubborn, iconoclastic existence on its fringes. It took a new generation of disaffected young people in the 1970s to elevate Nearing to a position of guru of a countercultural movement in which communitarianism constituted just one of many aspects, and one for which Nearing became a symbol, although he had never been a genuine leader.¹

While some critics of American society debated the merits of increasingly esoteric and even outlaw ideologies, others returned to familiar subjects and themes with regard to the small community. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing into the early twentieth, novelists and other assorted boosters had praised the small town as the ideal small community form. Then in the teens and twenties, novelists led a "revolt from the village" castigating and deprecating the value of small towns and their inhabitants. Among others, Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941) launched his own attack in Winesburg, Ohio (1919), which concerned the disintegration of small town life in the machine age. The small town had not the resources to resist in a healthy way the changes thrust on it. Its often twisted personalities were not sufficient to the task. Yet, Anderson made his peace with the small town in Home Town (1940), and saw in it a vehicle by which understanding, simplicity, and stability could be brought again to a troubled and complicated world. "The big world outside now is so filled with confusion. It seemed to me that our only hope, in the present muddle, was to try thinking small. . . . It may be that there is a bigness every man should seek, but the world is full now of false bigness, men speaking at meetings, trying to move masses of other men, getting a big feeling in that way; there's a trickiness in that approach to others--through applause, feeling a false power and importance."²

In Anderson's view, what gave small towns their new timeliness and relevance was that they highlighted "the problem of living with others a little closer, more persistently present. The real test of democracy may come in the towns." Small towns provided the real basis of stability in an uncertain world, and it was a myth that all people wanted to leave small towns or that all the prosperous ones did; local newspaper editors were often to blame for celebrating the success of local young people making good in the city by landing a "lucrative position." The small town was as much the source of progress and success as the city. Indeed, cities themselves were made up of an "infinite number of small towns." People naturally wanted to know the people they came in contact with on a daily basis, and thereby

feel at home--a deep sense of belonging. City people still remembered their small town roots and tried to replicate those settings in their new urban homes. In many ways, the gulf between town and city had narrowed, as technology did away with the often isolated condition of the small town before the twentieth century. Indeed, cars and highways opened up small town life in a new way, and gave vent to a renewed "American restlessness."³

Anderson considered the small town in relation to the cycle of the seasons, implying that the constancy of those places was a virtue; that they were naturally close to the land and its organic rhythms. There were things which could be counted on like spring cleaning, plus the one person in town who never cleaned their house or yard. Summertime constituted the best days of the small town because it was a time of good weather, suitable both for building all the elements of better lives and for spending more time out of doors. People were able to sit on their front porches, visit in a more relaxed way, drive a bit more leisurely, stay up a little later, and celebrate community more easily. "It is the time of mosquitoes, of summer rains, of hot still week-days on Main Street, no coal bills, greens from the garden, and roasting ear time. Life in the town during the long summer days and weeks relaxes."⁴

The philosophy of Home Town did not look to socio-economic creeds or particular religious doctrines for salvation. Anderson's realism admitted that poverty existed in the midst of plenty, and that discrimination existed on the basis of racism, bigotry, and ethnic stereotypes. The tragic element in human existence, however, could bring about the sober assessment of community problems and awareness of the mutual stake all citizens had in the human enterprise. "It is the old problem of living with men, finding a common ground on which you can stand with your fellows, this intensified in the towns." The real challenge of life was there in the small towns. It was closer to one's attention; the poor would find winter hard, but they were not so invisible as in the city. Some people could be hard to get along with, but "The characters of the towns give the towns their color. In the small towns you

know every man's idiosyncrasies. They cannot escape you. Life in the towns can be at times terrible or it can be infinitely amusing and absorbing."⁵

The experience of the small town seemed to offer its own advice--a kind of "live and let live" motto. "The life in the town is a test of man's ability to adjust himself. It tells the story of his skill in living with others, his ability to go out to others and to let others be a part of his own life. You have to go on living with your neighbors. . . . Without quite knowing it, you may yourself be one of the 'characters of your town.'" Small town life in a way compelled people to face themselves by having to face others in an at least quasi-intimate manner. Anderson drew strength from this realization, and even a bit of optimism. He urged that bright people not shy away from the challenge, but stay in small towns and take on positions of leadership, like newspaper editing and publishing (which Anderson did for a short time). Individualists could be at home in small towns, as the traditional American way offered not necessarily restrictions but freedom of choice. In this regard, Anderson cited religious denominationalism; Americans in general worshipped a common god, but expressed that belief in many different ways. Most small towns could satisfy the need for individualism, not only in religion, but also through technology. Movies, the radio, cars, the telephone, and mass circulation magazines put small towners in touch with the larger world, if that was what they wanted. Small town life was less isolated, less structured, freer, less puritanical, and less bound by tradition as a result. Yet small towns thrived on their link to the soil. "The small towns are and will remain close to the land. Modern machine-driven life has brought the land and the people of the land closer to the towns. There is a growing realization, in the towns, of the meaning of the land, a realization that it is the land out of which has come the vast wealth that has made our America the land of rich possibilities it still remains."⁶

Impressed by the variety of small town people and their experiences, which seemed to range across almost the entire spectrum of human existence, Anderson represented those

who severely criticized the small town in their youth, but who in their later maturity had reconciled themselves to its shortcomings; and by doing so, had discovered a deeper, more subtle awareness and truth about such places. Everyone needed a home, and small towns offered a surprisingly suitable one, if people were willing to meet it halfway. The rise of a mass society required a great deal of social adjustment and adaptation, but the small town remained, changed but intact. It took very little alteration in one's lifestyle to understand and participate in its potential richness of experience; one merely had to open oneself to the nuanced cultural ambiance which flowed through and around healthy small towns.

For Anderson, the American Dream still worked in small towns, and freedom could be experienced in such places. But for political and cultural radicals on the Left, American society was the next worst thing to evil itself, and it mattered little where one attempted to find liberty. Scott Nearing (1883-1983), sociology instructor and card-carrying Communist, exemplified this belief in the ubiquity of corruption and tyranny throughout the American "empire." So pervasive was the capitalist hegemony in Nearing's view, that when he and his first wife left New York City for a backwoods Vermont farm in 1932, he quickly characterized his new neighbors as just "pawns in a disintegrating society." American society as a whole held back the rest of the world from progressing to a true socialistic, communitarian state. "The United States today is the center of the counter-revolutionary movement of the world, for our ideological and political and economic institutions are products of the 18th and early 19th centuries." If Americans could adapt to changing material conditions, then Nearing could be more easily optimistic. "I imagine that we shall limit social change to a rate that humans can live in decently and to their advantage." Such a situation would be conducive to the production of freedom, because it only emerged out of conditions of security and stability. With further employment in academia blocked because of his socialist views, and the future of the public "socialist revolution" bleak in the United

States, Nearing opted for a personal search for salvation on the traditional American back-to-the-land path.⁷

Nevertheless, the Nearings believed in a kind of community, and proclaimed in their most famous book, Living the Good Life (1954), that "We looked upon association with the community as a necessary aspect of the good life." Furthermore, "We were cooperators in theory and were anxious to put the theory into practice." But their theory unfortunately did not come close to the beliefs and traditional practices of the people of the Green Mountains in Vermont. The Nearings idealized Soviet collectivism; even the finest diplomat in the world would have had trouble convincing highly individualistic, conservative local people to join a very regimented, disciplined, and spartan association envisioned by a pair of dogmatic, coldly rational, and inflexible intellectuals. Thus, when not much came of the Nearing's attempts at cooperation, they should not have been too surprised. In a chapter given over to the discussion of community, the Nearings do obviously protest too much. Although Scott admitted to being wrong about one of his ideas, he generally shifted most of the blame for the failure of efforts to establish a more tightly-knit, autonomous community to his Vermont neighbors. Cynical and frustrated by repeated rebuffs on the community front, the Nearings offered this somewhat bitter "lesson:" "human beings, conditioned from birth by the professions and practices of a private enterprise, individualistic pattern have little more chance to cooperate effectively than a leopard has to change his spots."⁸

The Nearings scorned the profit motive and tried to remove themselves from the cash nexus. Whenever possible, they got goods and services they were unable to produce for themselves by agreeing to a specific exchange of labor with their more cooperative neighbors. Their biggest co-operative venture was the joint operation of a maple syrup business. They were fond of referring to this work as their "bread labor," meaning the way they made the small amount of cash necessary to pay their taxes and procure those necessities for which they could not barter or produce themselves. They provided a building

for the equipment plus their labor, in addition to their partner's contribution of labor, a team of horses, and the evaporator pans, etc. The Nearings were unable to convince neighbors to set up a cooperative to market maple products, or even to tap more trees which had been untapped for decades. Their ideas for a valley-wide sawmill also seemed to fall on deaf ears. They reported that the locals were content with selling raw materials for low prices, when with a little planning and investment, they could market value-added products and make much more money while enjoying greater economic and social security and stability. They attributed most of this resistance to extreme individualism, but also to tensions, disruptions, and shortages produced by World War II. The Nearings also needlessly criticized some of their neighbors' strict religious beliefs, which in one case prohibited them from collecting sap on the Sabbath, thus contributing to inefficiency and waste in the maple syrup business, but also animosity and friction in their personal relationships. Again, most of the blame was affixed on the locals who were "trained to private enterprise and, for the most part, rejects from private enterprise economy. Most of these men and women treasured their freedom as individuals and looked upon cooperative enterprise as the first step toward super-imposed discipline and coercion. They were suspicious of organized methods and planning. They would have none of it. Consequently, most community projects dealt only with leisure-time activities,--diversion or recreation."⁹

One of the projects with the greatest potential for success across the whole community involved one of the Nearing's neighbors most interested in communitarianism. Like the Nearings, the Williams had come as outsiders to the area. Norm Williams bought an abandoned lumber camp and donated it to the township as a meeting place. The Nearings called Williams an equalitarian because he believed that genuine community required all the people to participate. In order to achieve that goal "activities were to be leveled down to the lowest common denominator." For a short time the meeting hall was a big success, showcasing local square dancing talent which became known on a regional basis. Later,

however, the center was forced to close over a town-wide disagreement about the use of alcohol at dances. "Throughout the entire effort to achieve valley-wide cooperation, each household remained an independent economic and social unit, with minor features of give and take maintained by special arrangement between the families involved. When the cycle was completed and the community house was abandoned, the valley stood about where it had been a decade earlier."¹⁰

In contrast to the community house fiasco, the Nearings presented the Sunday morning musical hour they sponsored as a complete success. Music seemed to soothe the savage beast, so to speak, as the Nearings noted with pleasure that few heated discussions of a political nature started during or after these musical sessions. In fact, more people attended the music hours than showed up for discussions of critical public issues. But again, the Nearing's tendency toward authoritarianism showed through: "The community which desires to survive must have an ideology which is accepted by all of its members." Was there no room for deviation or difference of opinion? Norm Williams, a friend of the Nearings, thought that was the case. He called their sojourn in Vermont a failure: "What a pity the beautiful dream of Community that you and I and Harold cherished could not have blossomed in our little Valley, after all the struggles and tortures we went through to plant the seeds." He further chided the Nearings for dismissing their neighbors too quickly as nothing more than puppets of the capitalist society. He blamed the Nearings for "intolerance underlying nearly all your references to community relations in your book" (Living the Good Life). Indeed, their rigidity and dogmatism showed up in nearly every aspect of their lives including their strict vegetarianism, complete abstinence from coffee, alcohol, and tobacco, organic gardening, refusal to buy consumer gadgets or power tools, and a principle of keeping no animals, not even pets. Interestingly, they willingly used a neighbor's team of horses to collect maple sap, and they always owned some sort of pickup truck or four-wheel drive vehicle. They did prove, however, that people could live quite well without a regular

job, on their own land, and under their own direction at their own pace. In that sense, the Nearing's \$1,100 investment in sixty acres of stony Vermont land paid off well.¹¹

Although he was used to severe attacks from his enemies, such criticism of Scott Nearing by his friends probably caused him some pain and perhaps contributed to a certain hard-heartedness in his later life. He even broke completely with his son John over his work for Time magazine, his criticism of Soviet foreign policy, and his capitalistic lifestyle. Yet Scott Nearing, in particular, never stopped writing about the inadequacies of the American system. "Unbridled greed" constituted the basis of the economy, and it led people to seek their fortunes in urban areas. This "urban quest" haunted modern civilization. It progressed at the expense of rural areas, and added nothing to the cities themselves. "The city consists of a vast group of respectable parasites who dictate foreign policy--lawyers, real estate operators, etc., and the disreputable third who keep the police busy." While it was difficult to establish true community in rural areas, it was next to impossible in cities. "Sterility and footlooseness are characteristic of a great majority in urban life--purposeless, cynical, embittered--so comfortable that they cannot tell whether the temperature goes up or down." The entire society suffered from "the struggle for power." In spite of good minds, will, and material wealth to make a paradise on earth, the power struggle caused people to "give in to fear, selfishness, gluttony, and acquisitiveness."¹²

The solution to the ongoing American and world crisis stood out plainly for Scott Nearing. Philosophically, capitalism was a bankrupt system which would lead to continued deceit and war. Western civilization itself was a failure which retained one major asset--democracy. It could be perfected, but not in the present, because democracy and the profit economy were incompatible. Competition as an economic practice was completely out of control and had led to two world wars and the greatest depression in modern times. As the alternative to the dire state of affairs he saw from his Vermont Forest Farm (and after seventeen years, an even more isolated acreage on a rocky Maine coastline), for the most

part, Nearing seemed to advocate the concept of the cooperative commonwealth. But the outlines of his ideal society often veered perilously close to the Soviet example of the mass socialist state. He often uttered uncompromising statements like "The world will be united by totalitarianism." Even though he eventually put some intellectual distance between his ideal and the Soviet system, he never thoroughly repudiated it. He believed the economic system of the United States to be so weak that he predicted in 1958 that it would be beaten in an economic war with the Soviet Union. It was obvious to Nearing that a socialized democracy fit the times. Government ownership of the major means of production--the socialization of all power tools--still applied, maybe even more so in modern society. He conceded that this action might cause the buildup of a giant bureaucracy, but he hoped it would result in the decentralization of global society, instead of the example of concentration afforded by New York City. "The world has become an entity, in the exchange of goods, movement of person, and the exchange of ideas. The interest of the whole must be put ahead of any part." The natural outcome would naturally be a "commonwealth of world citizenry." But the U. S. State Department, in Nearing's view, continued to be the driving force behind the creation of two exclusive and opposing worlds.¹³

Although never very clear about the mechanism of cultural transmutation, Nearing proposed slightly more definite structural outlines for the world cooperative commonwealth. It would consist of a worldwide federation, itself composed of federations at all the lower levels. For example, at the lowest level, local production units would agree to function together. Municipalities, counties, and regions would also construct federations. Whether these cooperative networks would be structured along traditional, historical boundaries or in accord with the regional theories of Lewis Mumford and Benton MacKaye was unclear. But Nearing was quite definite that the transformation would occur first in the material conditions, the socio-economic-political system, and later on the ideational level. The solution was structural: first, convene a constitutional convention, if not on a global level

then for each nation; second, move toward one world government; third, institute a thoroughgoing cooperation replacing competition; fourth, socialize all important property; fifth, begin comprehensive social planning; and finally, create conditions of "equalized opportunity" so people could reach their full potentials. Nearing never developed the full implications for small communities in such a cooperative commonwealth. In one place, he did criticize intentional communities: "at best they parallel the life of civilizations against which they protest, while they share its problems." Ostensibly, however, Nearing imagined that leaders like he and his wife would step forward to pull together their locales simultaneously with the process of federation going ahead at all levels. Put in the extreme negative, Nearing's plan on the local level at least was vaguely evident: "Had we been able to integrate fifteen or twenty families of the immediate neighborhood into a well-knit unit, based economically on cooperation and mutual aid and socially on the principles of live and help live, not "mine for me" but "ours for us," the resulting community still would have been woefully deficient in a variety of complementary skills, talents and social relationships."¹⁴

Although far from sanguine about their Vermont experience, the Nearings hinted at some general preconditions for community development. They observed a lack of two basic social requirements in their Vermont community experiment. The Nearings referred to behaviorist psychologist B. F. Skinner's enunciation of those principles in his utopian Walden Two (1948). Minimally, communities must have enough population to "provide variety, diversity and specialization; and sufficient control over ingress and egress to preserve ideological purity, group identity and group purpose." The absence of these conditions confirmed, at least to the Nearings, why they had failed to build a rural collective in Vermont, and justified their later removal to Maine under both real and imagined pressure from outside "developers." Essentially, the Nearings gave up on open-country America because the community prerequisites were not in place. "Our valley in southern Vermont, like virtually all rural America, was lacking in these minimum requirements for a balanced,

autonomous community existence. . . . There is no positive force, in rural Vermont or in rural America, drawing communities together for well-defined social purposes." Even the famed New England town meeting was too limited in its purview to act as the basic institution dealing with general rural welfare.¹⁵

The Nearings painted a grim and grimmer picture of rural America. In Vermont, the only thing stopping the development of their ideal community was the innate, stubborn resistance by the natives. By the late forties and fifties, it became clear that rural America would sooner or later have to deal also with many of the same threatening phenomena which had made urban living such a arduous challenge for many people. "Atomism, separatism and consequent isolation have increasingly played havoc with rural life in the United States as the family has decreased in size while the household has shed some of its most essential functions." Changes in technology and marketing reached out and invaded the homes and businesses of rural dwellers, often undermining the small amount of cohesion present. "The resulting absence of group spirit and neighborhood discipline, the chaos and confusion of perpetual movement to and from work, to and from school, to and from the shows and the dances, has destroyed the remnants of rural solidarity and left a shattered, purposeless, functionless, ineffective, unworkable community." The Nearings took what they believed was the only path open to them in creating a conceivable cooperative community. "Against this all-pervasive decline and dissolution of the fragile, tenuous structure of America's rural community life we attempted to make a stand in the Pikes Falls valley Our chances of success were about equal to those of an Alpinist who throws himself against an avalanche." The Nearings held to their principled ground, perhaps too tightly and unyieldingly.¹⁶

This trait endeared them to the hedonistic, political and spiritual radicals of the counterculture who shared their belief that American society (as well as the entire Western Civilization) represented institutionalized insanity. But in the 1950s, the Nearings were seen generally as eccentric, opinionated socialists who took every possible chance to excoriate the

American Way. Their rhetoric verged on what we today would call militia-survivalist talk. "As . . . the night of oblivion gathers over the American Way of Life, a homestead becomes increasingly important for anyone whose post of duty lies inside the narrowing confines of western civilization and who wants to live a quiet, simple and harmless, unharassed life." Part of their "public relations problem" stemmed from the fact they both Helen and Scott Nearing seemingly attacked all of their personal problems simultaneously, and they could not understand why the rest of the community could not do so also. They could find no intentional community which maintained views similar to their own, so they fell back on a semi-self-sufficient homestead while lecturing in person on the road across the United States during the 1950s and early 1960s, and in numerous books and pamphlets until their deaths, both well over ninety years old. "A well-ordered homestead provides a refuge, a haven, a cyclone cellar, and the surest guarantee of healthful survival. . . . It is a means of contacting nature, in many ways as important as contacting society. It enables us to live harmlessly in a violent world. It is a desirable, limited alternative to one segment of the existing social order and is a refuge for political deviants."¹⁷

Despite the thrust of their numerous public statements, the Nearings tended to manifest an attitude not so much of searching for the best small community life, but of having already decided on the one true course of action. As such, although they corresponded with some of the leaders of the small community movement (like Arthur Morgan and Granville Hicks), they were definitely not among its recognized leadership and were not often referred to among the more notable movement participants. Asked once by Arthur Morgan for communitarian suggestions, Scott wrote back saying "I have no suggestions beyond the desirability of encouraging people (and also warning them) when they want to launch community programs." The Nearings were, however, quite well read in the literature of the movement and were cognizant of both urban and rural alternatives to conventional middle-class lifestyles. The Nearings felt, as they did in 1932 when they began their homestead

experiment, "that the rural alternative (the 'small community' of Arthur E. Morgan, Baker Brownell, and Ralph Borsodi) offers greater individual and collective constructive possibilities than the urban." But that did not mean the Nearings heartedly endorsed those special rural places which achieved a healthy communitarian status. "We are surer now than we were then that these communities are confined rigidly to the few, rarely endowed and super-normally equipped men and women who are willing and able to live as altruists after being trained, conditioned and coerced by an acquisitive, competitive, ego-centric social system." Yet, the Nearings considered the attempt, that is the experience, at community creation as the most important part of the challenge offered by human life. "The value of doing something does not lie in the ease or difficulty, the probability or improbability of its achievement, but in the vision, the plan, the determination and the perseverance, the effort and the struggle which go into the project." Thus, although occupying a temporary or perhaps, more accurately, a peripheral position in the small community movement, Helen and Scott Nearing brought to bear a profound critique of American society and an idiosyncratic vision of the small community which renewed itself through the attraction and interaction of a new generation of wanderers and searchers. By the twilight of their lives they had become the high gurus of the back-to-the-land phenomenon.¹⁸

Not all radical intellectuals fed up with the urban scene went to the lengths represented by the Nearings in leaving, protesting, and setting up alternative lifestyles to the existence they had known in mass society. Yet, each in their own way, small communitarians reviled the developing urban-suburban hegemony, and saw it as a crime against humanity. 1932 proved to be the year in which two divergent careers in the small community movement were launched. Both the Nearings and Granville Hicks (1901-1982) turned to the milieu of the small community in that year for answers to their questions about the future of American society. Coming from similar backgrounds as intellectuals, teachers, Communist Party members, and writers, their subsequent choices about community life branched off in

dissimilar directions as the Nearings opted for an essentially separate homesteading life while Hicks explored Sherwood Anderson's small town world. In his chief work on community, Hicks used Small Town (1946) to probe the complexities and intricacies of the challenge small town life posed, and what its role would and could be in the "new" world of American mass society. He also wanted to understand "the barriers that do exist between the intellectuals and the rest of society."¹⁹

Hicks and wife originally moved to the subject of his book, Grafton, New York, in 1932, as summer residents. They adopted a permanent status in 1936, in the town of a little less than 1,000 people. The town of Grafton (Hicks referred to it as Roxborough in the book) actually consisted of the township by that name, plus a small town center, or village, which acted as the cultural locus of the locale. Grafton lay to the east of Albany and Troy, in rolling, rocky hill country common to much of eastern New York state and upland New England. In writing his book, Hicks hoped to discover not only things "about the particular town in which my neighbors and I live; it is a study of a small fragment of American life." Hicks also sought to answer Baker Brownell's "essential question: Can the human community survive in modern industrial civilization?" Out of substantial correspondence between the two men, it is clear that Hicks shared much of Brownell's philosophy and his feelings on the threat mass society posed to the small community. He agreed with a typical Brownellian utterance such as "The modern industrial city dominating our lives is withal a terrible defeat, a defeat biologically, morally, appreciatively, even economically." Brownell encouraged Hicks in his small town writing project and indicated he wished that he was living in a small town too. Upon its publication, Brownell said he thought it to be the best book he had read on the small town. Hicks and Brownell also had in common a connection to the Rockefeller Foundation, which financed the writing of Small Town.²⁰

Hicks stayed with his theme of the problem of the intellectual in the small town throughout his book, partly because he saw them as having the ability to provide much

needed leadership in such places, and also because he believed along with Van Wyck Brooks that the "high ideals" entertained by most intellectuals were often not connected to reality, as if it were "sordid." Hicks further believed that urban intellectuals found it easy to shirk their duty to their locale. "The average urban intellectual knows other urban intellectuals, and that is all. If the urban intellectual knew the postman and the elevator operator and the exterminator and the corner grocer--if, that is, he talked with them in his home and in theirs, if he encountered them at church and on election day . . . --he might find that they have a good deal in common with my Roxborough neighbors." Theory and practice, thought and action, mind and body; these were the dichotomies that needed attention in American culture. Brownell observed that Small Town presented "the relationship, the conflict, modern dilemma of mind and folk, and the sterility and impoverishment of one without the other." Hicks agreed and admitted that such a judgment had grown during years of first-hand experience with "city intellectuals when they talk about 'the people'--whether they take the line that the people are boobs or refer piously to the common man." In addition, he had developed an intense dislike for cities. "I cannot understand why anyone wants to live in New York or Chicago or Washington or San Francisco;" "they are manifestations of the disease of our civilization." He reported he had argued that small communities could act as the necessary "bulwarks against the onslaught of modern society," and by extension, urban conglomerations.²¹

Although he was generally salutary to small town life, Hicks was not particularly sanguine as to the future of small towns--they were in trouble. Less than confident in the solubility of the problem, he believed that the ideological disruption incipient in the advance of mass society would be enough to kill small towns. Grafton itself represented an inauspicious place for Hicks' immersion in small town life. It lacked a fire department and a library; it suffered from patches of "squalid poverty;" both its church life and civic life were "rent by quarrelsome factions;" and its schools were poorly equipped and staffed by some

teachers of questionable competence. But he took heart from the example of a friend's successful integration into a New England town similar in some ways to Grafton. But the basic problem remained: "could a person bring to a small community some benefit from the knowledge and experience he had gained in college, in an urban career, in a world of ideas beyond the small town's life?" Hicks worried that as an intellectual, and a radical one at that, he would never fit in or be accepted enough to make even a small difference. He was also put off by Grafton's long history of dirty, petty politics. But the point of participation, as Hicks viewed it, was to see what a person could do; the reward was in the friendships, pleasure, learning, and accomplishments that constituted life itself. "I knew that I was powerless to make more than the mildest reforms and that I could achieve these only if I were lucky. I had once thought that I could make the world over, but I was now prepared to be satisfied with very moderate changes in Roxborough." Most people, including Hicks, pointed to the main enemy as fascism, and the chief struggle as the bolstering of democracy. The question for Hicks boiled down to the locale: "if we can't solve the problems of democracy as they present themselves concretely and intimately in our own immediate environment, how much chance have we of winning the larger fight?"²²

The answer to his own question came in the form of greater personal participation in the life of the town. Hicks' status as an outsider ended as he took on one volunteer job after another. He reported that he probably would never be treated as a native, but "I had become, rather abruptly, a person to be reckoned with in community affairs." Part of the answer would also be found in the native conservatism and lack of desire of the local residents to adopt city ways. Already in the thirties, however, local residents observed that some of the independence of their small town was vanishing. By the forties, Grafton had effectively become something of a distant suburb of Troy. Widespread car ownership and better roads increasingly linked Grafton residents to city jobs. Yet, the appeal of small town life lingered on as a special way of life, in the love of the open spaces, a diminished by still strong spirit

of independence, the relaxed feeling of knowing people well and generally being accepted by them, and some certainty that tomorrow would be much like today. Grafton's population remained remarkably homogeneous, and the memories of a "fully independent" town had not disappeared from the minds of residents. Hicks reported that they made deliberate efforts to do things as a community, and that the external threat was a major motivation in their renewed efforts toward creating a healthy community. Another "selling point" in Grafton's favor, and perhaps many other small towns, was the relative lack of class divisions. Hicks found only two real socio-economic groups and even these, "Although I still find it hard to believe, . . . are largely subjective." As reported by other sociological observers of small towns, while the criteria for dividing the population into classes was not always apparent, residents had little trouble in doing just that when it was necessary. "Class divisions are clearly recognized, and they are important. There is not an organization in the town, including the churches, in which the upper class does not constitute a majority and monopolize the offices." The most consistent group functions to closely follow class lines were social gatherings, mainly parties. "When all is said and done, however, the situations in which class lines matter are less numerous than those in which they don't count." People generally participated in town life regardless of their class. Hicks pointed to what historian Arnold Toynbee called "'the link of locality'" and it was Hicks' "guess that this is a far more significant tie than any other."²³

In the same tradition as sociological observers herein discussed such as Albert Blumenthal and James West, Hicks studied the elements which composed the cohesiveness and solidarity of his study town. Graftonians gossiped intensely, and Hicks found that a knowledge of the factual content of their neighbor's lives was important. So that much conversation was simply for the "sake of talking--that is, for the sake of establishing a relationship with the group." The locals also had the ability to get things done when they were pressed. Rural shrewdness was not a myth. They also adapted quite well to the

machine age and the use of autos. They generally liked machines and made the shift to the motor era well. Hicks believed, however, that the locals had not made a good transition to the modern age in terms of their ethical beliefs and practical morality. Right and wrong seemed to be increasingly debatable. "Today the prevailing attitude is a bewildered latitudinarianism. The narrowness that is supposed to prevail in small towns does exist, but it is not common nor influential." The new tolerance showed by locals was good in and of itself. But Hicks sensed a possible tie-in between ethical flux and a deteriorating local political situation. People increasingly shunned involvement in major decisions. In addition, they avoided direct public discussions of both big and small issues. Hicks noticed a general ability in private to communicate easily, but in public people proved to be relatively inarticulate, especially the younger generations. He attributed that to exposure to a more complicated society outside of the locale where differences in status, knowledge, and power were more exaggerated than at home. Hicks also criticized the lack of a noble sense of values, and the lack of strongly held beliefs about what constituted the good citizen or utilitarian ethics. The concept of efficiency appeared to be nearly absent from Grafton, while loyalty exhibited in that town "seem[ed] admirable." Neighborliness was its highest virtue--seeing others as people, whether they were liked or disliked. No one was a blank for Hicks in Grafton. "Good, bad, or indifferent, they are there--forces, dynamos, or, more accurately, entities, organisms, or, to be quite clear, human beings."²⁴

Institutionally, Grafton had made large strides forward in the decade of the forties, some of which could be attributed to Hicks himself. Although he could not "get elected as dogcatcher," people liked to have him volunteer for the boards and committees which composed part of the local institutional matrix. The locals played at politics like an exciting sports game, with high election turnouts. Although elected officials were paid little, they usually put in long hours. The problem as Hicks saw it, was that they did not really deliver the goods. Partisan politics also hampered action along progressive lines. Hicks lamented

that his part of New York did not have the nonpartisan New England town meeting setup. Nevertheless, he said "Our institutions will suffice if we are wise enough to make the most of them."²⁵

The effectiveness of institutions would matter little if Grafton or any town were not going to survive. Hicks asked, "Has Roxborough a future? Has any small town a future in this age of industrialism, urbanism, and specialization?" He saw four possible futures for Grafton: as an agricultural town, despite more and more land reverting to forest; dominated by a factory or some other industry; as a tourist and resort area; or as a commuter town. Hicks forecast that large societal forces would count for more, and would be accompanied by more governmental intervention. Some towns would die or disband, their functions taken over by either the country or the state or both. Realist that he was, Hicks retained hope for most of the small towns scattered across the nation. "I doubt if we have outgrown the need for a comprehensible society." Most people wanted to be part of a group and have its support and that of their neighbors. If James West's Plainville or Irwin, Iowa could rebound from decline or the challenge of modernity, then so could small places like Grafton. Hicks noted that Grafton's fate may have been like that of Landaff, New Hampshire, which existed as a moribund shell of its former self. But since Grafton was so close to Troy, its money and jobs paradoxically helped sustain it even while it threatened its existence. The problems of the city had a way of finding their way to small towns too. How should they be best dealt with? "There is a good deal of talk these days about the common people and the grass roots, much of it being done by individuals who recommend measures that would inevitably concentrate power in the hands of a small minority." The very complexities of the "problem of practical democracy . . . makes me all the more certain that people should have as much power as possible over the things that directly affect their lives." Hicks did not want to lead a "crusade to abolish cities" so that small towns might flourish, nor was he unappreciative of the good things which came out huge urban areas, but he was "inclined to think that if New York

[City] didn't exist, the good things would manifest themselves elsewhere." Small towns had the possibility for survival because of their particular attractions: they were friendlier and neighborly; they were potentially closer to democratic practice; and their individual and small groups counted for something—real change could take place, as Hicks noted in the success stories of such places as Darby and Lonepine in Baker Brownell's Montana Study.²⁶

Even those too rare instances of unqualified triumph would be overwhelmed by a modern totalitarianism. It existed inherently in the industrial society in a latent state. "One can only conclude that the potentiality of totalitarianism exists in the very nature of a mass society. The functioning of the larger society requires the coordination of millions of lives, and the totalitarian countries demonstrate that the coordination can be achieved from the top down, if no other way." Were the managers, bureaucrats, and professionals in charge of society as James Burnham's "managerial revolution" claimed? A mass society required some degree of planning at high levels. But localities needed to know what the larger society would be doing so that they could plan and start their own projects. The TVA provided a good example of that concept, and Hicks traveled to Tennessee in the spring of 1945 to find out if David Lilienthal's claims about a "grass-roots democracy" were true. Hicks' reviews were decidedly mixed: TVA officials seemed genuinely interested in their jobs and the people they served; yet, "As for any feeling of direct participation in the work of the TVA, any sense of this agency as something that belongs to the people, I found not a sign." Democracy seemed to be a fragile thing: with theory but no substance it became a hollow shell of would-be egalitarianism; with substance but no theory it became a perfunctory obligation. Hicks wrote: "The experience was a useful warning, for it made me realize that insistence on some theoretical conception of pure democracy can result in the negation of democratic practice." Americans trusted in their individualism to keep tyranny at bay, coming strongly together only in emergencies.²⁷

But ironically, mass society did not mind individualism, and accommodated it quite easily. Hicks pointed to the crowds of young men going off to work in the city each day from Grafton and other small towns. The competitive spirit remained strong within them and the larger society used it against them to foster impersonality and atomistic lifestyles. Mass society and small towns, in Hicks' opinion, could co-exist in only one way. His solution lay in something he called "understanding." This vague, ill-defined concept put the burden for reconciliation on small towners, who had to become more knowledgeable, sophisticated, and "street smart" about how mass society worked. But according to Hicks, they were woefully ignorant of their predicament and not equipped to do much of anything about it. Robert Lynd used this apparent contradiction as the basis for a vigorously critical review of Small Town. "Mr. Hicks is right in recognizing the potential power in the little people of America; but it is sheer moonshine to expect them to find and to exercise this power to build more democracy within the present coercions of monopoly capitalism." Hicks would simply tinker with free enterprise to prevent another collapse of the economic system. By opting for nothing more than that, Lynd claimed Hicks paid a dear price. Does not "one's grateful preoccupation with belonging on one's narrow personal sector blots [sic] out awareness of and interest in the larger strategy of the total battle?" Sounding a great deal like Arthur Morgan, Hicks said, as if in rejoinder, that "The living community, with its many-sided relationships, remains the natural seed-bed for social growth." Furthermore, he argued for regional planning, decentralization, and the strengthening of neighborhoods and other small-scale residential units in cities, all the hot-button issues which had been around for at least twenty years. In conclusion, Hicks fell back on a common-sense approach: "All I can say is that we would do well to work on the problem at both ends. . . . I have long recognized the importance of the 'big' end of the problem. Now I have come to see the importance of the 'little' end and to feel that it is nearer my size."²⁸

Like most democrats, Hicks lauded compulsory education as the training ground for American liberty and political choice. Yet it had not been a great success. The educational system for the most part remained in the horse and buggy era, and the results threatened the American way of life. "If the democracies do not find a democratic way of reforming education, a totalitarian way is ready and waiting for the use of the dictators." Hicks desired curriculum reform to speak directly to the problem of community in America. He also mentioned the need for greater freedom of thought and speech in schools, but was not forthcoming on how that goal could be accomplished. He agreed with others that the schools constituted an easy target and that their reform was no panacea. Yet, "the great social battles always have to be fought on many fronts simultaneously. If the schools can do some of their jobs a little more efficiently, that will be their share."²⁹

What really perplexed, bothered, and even stung Hicks was the problem and status of the intellectual in American society. In Europe, they retained a respected, sometimes even honored position in society. But Americans were suspicious of their writers and misunderstood their function. Part of the problem with community, according to Hicks, hinged on spanning the gulf between intellectuals and others. He believed that their talents were not being used to society's advantage, and that this was damaging to both society and intellectuals. "Certainly the position of the intellectual today is a dubious and unhappy one." Much of the blame, however, should be laid at the feet of the intellectuals themselves. Urban intellectuals in particular "suffers from the delusion that he is at the very heart of America." Although "It would be stupid to blame the intellectuals for a situation that all the complex forces of social change have created, . . . perhaps the intellectual does owe it to himself and to society to break through barriers, not build them up." Intellectuals were particularly well equipped to help lead experimentation in democracy. They should use small communities as laboratories to bring about desperately needed social reconstruction. Hicks emerged supremely confident in regard to having the ability and knowledge base to

solve society's problems. "We, collectively, know enough to make a decent society, but the knowledge is concentrated in too few heads. There is no pathway of confidence and sympathy between the intellectuals and the people along which knowledge can travel." In short, intellectuals were not allowed to do their jobs nor did they themselves seem to take the necessary responsibility toward that end. Their duty, however, only started with statements of the problem. "Any urban intellectual will grant that there is a lag in rural areas, and when he has made the admission, he thinks he has solved the problem. But if one has to deal with James West's 'millions of Plainvillers,' not all of whom live in small towns, one finds that having a label for the phenomenon does not help much."³⁰

After traveling the long and winding road of the dilemma of the small community in mass society, Hicks found himself virtually at the same fork in the road as had Scott Nearing. As an intellectual, Nearing had tried to work in a community, but had given up to wait out the inevitable destruction of the capitalist order. Hicks chose the other road, and even though he claimed his book was not a "plea for the small town," his support for it was unswerving and unflagging. Ultimately, however, the future of the small town rested on the reintegration of the intellectual with the community, because without them the community was not whole. "If, as I believe, the intellectuals have the skills that are essential to the maintenance of intelligent control over social forces, then the issue of the struggle between democracy and totalitarianism depends on their decision, and it is their chief duty to make sure that they are with the people and the people with them." The fate of humankind would neither depend on the Enlightenment notion of linear progress, nor the "arrival of the classless society" due to the "operation of a dialectical materialism," nor "irresistible forces making for either chaos or despotism." Humanity would reap its rewards, both good and bad, based on its own conscious decisions made in countless communities around the world.³¹

One might argue that what Granville Hicks did for the primarily rural small community, Lewis Mumford (1895-1990) did for the mainly urban small community. One of the few community observers who wrote about its role in the urban scene, Mumford never gave up his attraction and admiration for the city form, and continued to be its champion, though also an ardent critic and reformer. Whereas most of the participants in the small community movement willingly turned their attention away from the city, or rejected it completely, Mumford believed that some form of urban life brought real benefits to society, and was even necessary for the continuance of civilization itself. "The city . . . is the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community. It is the place where the diffused rays of many separate beams of life fall into focus, with gains in both social effectiveness and significance. . . . Cities are products of the earth. . . . The city is a fact in nature, like a cave, a run of mackerel or an ant-heap. But it is also a conscious work of art." The problem with cities lay in their modern evolution; they had ceased to be either large or small communities and instead had taken the form of the megalopolis—a form of social organization anathema to the human spirit. "The mechanized physical shell [the "metropolitan slum and industrial factory districts"] took precedence in every growing town over the civic nucleus: men became dissociated as citizens in the very process of coming together in imposing economic organizations." The urban crisis constituted not only an emergency of place, but also one of the entire culture. "The task of city design involves the vaster task of rebuilding our civilization." Mumford would have people creating "region by region, . . . an effective symbiosis, or co-operative living together." This highly abbreviated version of his indictment of modern life, especially urban structures, and the direction of his solution to its problems clearly showed his affinity to many of the basic principles of the small community movement. In concert with his other writings, Mumford expressed his approval of the ideas of decentralization, regionalism, social planning, the neighborhood as

the basic social unit, the integrity of town and country, and the superiority of the garden city as the best community compromise between the village and metropolitan forms.³²

Although Mumford seldom spoke directly to the small community, his campaign for a regional reformation of American society established him as an intellectual and ideological brother to many of the small communitarians. He corresponded with some of them (most notably Arthur Morgan), shared ideas and sources, was quoted occasionally, and was invited to speak at various conferences and seminars such as the New England Institute of International Relations in 1948, and the 7th Annual Small Community Conference in 1950, at Antioch College in Ohio. Almost before any of the small communitarians had composed their beginning assault on the urban-dominated industrial order, Mumford had formulated his opening critique of that society, and his alternative in the form of a regional culture which consciously aligned itself with geographical and social places, rather than as by-products of the goals of a money economy. In such books as Sticks and Stones (1924), The Golden Day (1926), Herman Melville (1929), and The Brown Decades (1931), Mumford outlined a potential "secular religion of culture" which subordinated economics and political conflict beneath a new tradition of wide-ranging public discussions arising from all aspects of culture simultaneously, especially as they were encountered in actual life experience. To be a public culture, it had to be comprehensively cultural, not just representative of any one region or locality. As an example of a provincial, atavistic, and reactionary regionalism, Mumford contended that some Southern Agrarians sought a modern version of an ante-bellum aristocracy based on an old-fashioned agricultural system. He suggested that "the more honest of them will also arbitrarily limit culture to the purely literary interests and language-skills of the ante-bellum regime: a pious renunciation of the modern heritage. In other words, they accept cultural impoverishment."³³

Mumford promulgated his most complete and comprehensive statement of regionalism in the last three chapters of The Culture of Cities (1938). This included a definition and the

nature of regionalism, the basis of regional government and politics, and numerous aspects of the "social basis of the new urban order," such as architecture, art, education, housing, and so on. All of his subsequent books and articles which had anything to do with regionalism tended to be restatements or articulations of sub-points already presented before 1940. For example, in The Condition of Man (1944), he explored the modern collective personality of humankind and its implications for a culture truly dedicated to a "renewal of life," the name he also gave to the series of books dealing with most of the recent cultural history of Western civilization. It included Technics and Civilization (1934), The Culture of Cities, The Condition of Man, and The Conduct of Life (1951). The more material and social conditions of the new regional vision laid out in 1938, became progressively more psychologically and spiritually oriented in later books, as for example in The Condition of Man, where he argued for a single-minded search for a oneness of sentiment about what a genuinely human culture would be like. "To this end, we must explore the historic nature of the modern personality and the community, in all their richness, variety, complication, and depth, as both the means and the ends of our effort. As the processes of unity take form in the mind, we may expect to see a similar integration take place in institutions." The physical shape of cities, their energy flows, and transportation system remained important, but elaboration of the regional vision to the emotional and mental realms of human life could not be ignored either.³⁴

Yet in any region, one had to deal first and foremost with the environment: its geography, the existence of a state of dynamic equilibrium where a change in one part of the region sets off changes in the rest, and its lack of hard and fast boundaries which promoted the realization of the interrelationship existing in natural regions. Planning should deal with the considered needs of the community in relation to its regional place. "Regional planning is essentially the effort to apply scientific knowledge and stable standards of judgment, justified by rational human values, to the exploitation of the earth." Mumford went on to talk about such use of the earth on a basis of communal ownership as a concept quite

ordinary and common. "Modern civilization will not be able to use its collective energies and collective wisdom for the benefit of its members until the land goes back to the community from which it was originally derived and becomes part of the common stock." The same would apply to all other basic resources and the human needs they served. "At some point there must be a means of determining, for a given region and period, the norm of consumption in terms of food, clothing, shelter, recreation, education, and culture." At this point in Mumford's thinking, the tension between the individual and the whole gave way in favor of the group. "Only when the whole has been plotted out can the individual function be directed with efficiency. Lacking such plans, there is a constant hiatus between productive energies and human fulfillments: the wheel turns rapidly, but the squirrel remains within his cage." Only later in the 1960s, with the publication of his two-volume The Myth of the Machine (1967, 1970), did Mumford shift the balance back toward the individual.³⁵

The new regional order would feature planning on all levels from the individual to the planetary, where Mumford envisioned a type of one world federation or union. As examples of successful planning at high levels, he pointed approvingly to the Tennessee Valley Authority, the New York Port Authority, the creation of the Appalachian Trail, the emergence of regional poetry, painting, and literature, the work of the Geological Survey and the USDA in soil conservation, and the rise of a healthy regionalism in the South under the influence of Howard Odum and his associates. The success of these examples moved Mumford to issue a warning about the nature of regionalism: it "must not make the mistake of the medieval municipalities: it must not fancy that it can control within its local area alone economic and political forces that lie outside the scope of any single area." This new notion of regionalism looked simultaneously both to its locale and to an "inter-regional framework: ultimately a world culture on every plane." Sure enough in his vision, Mumford issued five "postulates of regionalism." First, no area was an island. The best life implied interaction and aid from the rest of the world. Second, the region was a complex of both given

geographic conditions and imposed human social elements. "Not found as a finished product in nature, not solely the creation of human will and fantasy, the region, like its corresponding artifact, the city, is a collective work of art." Third, regions were definitely delineated, but overlapped, and merged into their neighboring areas. Fourth, while the environmental lines of regional evolution were semi-permanent, culture changed much faster, and so needed to be updated and readjusted more often. To accomplish this end, Mumford suggested that "A migration of the elite, from region to region, is a necessary stimulus to regional culture." Fifth, some political and even traditional boundaries often times failed to reflect true regional identities. Thus they must be flexible enough to stand alteration and shifting as the cultural elements of a region change. "Planning and co-operative enterprise must take the place occupied by political boundaries and purely legal codes in creating an orderly polity and an ordered economic life. The task of modern civilization is to live in a wall-less world."³⁶

Mumford's ideal structure in that kind of world continued to be the garden city. Optimistically, he believed that most elements of Ebenezer Howard's brainchild could find fruition in cities much larger than Howard had imagined for his garden cities, which he limited to between 30,000 and 40,000 people. Britain still remained the leader in garden cities, but American had come close with the greenbelt towns. But they largely failed in their purpose because of a lack of local support and consistent administration. "The garden city can take form . . . only when our political and economic institutions are directed toward regional rehabilitation." The lack of national commitment and bureaucratic continuity would slow or stop any plan to recolonize the less populated areas of the United States according to Howard's model.³⁷

If the physical outlines of the regional city proceeded along the lines of the garden city, what would the social basis of the new urban order look like? In the final chapter of The Culture of Cities, Mumford laid out a nearly utopian vision of how regionalism would affect every aspect of social life for the better. Architecture, for example, would be used not just to

shield people from the elements, but as a symbol that would inspire them to greater insights and understanding on a daily basis. Sanitation and medical practices would improve and create a human experience much freer from disease and chronic ailments. Youth would be allowed to really play, in addition to work, so that they would grow up more balanced and anxiety-free. Men would play a larger role in the functioning of the domestic home, and thus would be part of a "bi-polar art" which would enhance healthy emotionalism and contribute to a new age of unashamed eroticism. The "capacity for renewal" would be fixed into the regional culture, so that the old iconography of monuments would not be so strong and compelling. The community could recognize the achievements of those who had gone before, but need not be enslaved to their memory or their cultural regime. The museum would be brought to the people in the place of meeting areas and community centers. The school would become the dominant institution, outranking church, factory, or courthouse. A life-economy would replace a money-economy; "under such an economic order, communal choices become more important than individual choices, and more and more of the activities of the citizen's life are released from pecuniary constraint." Size, density, and area of new towns would always be a function of the human needs which they served. Mumford's utopian "biotechnic community" was not identified by the "introduction of any essentially new institutions so much as their adequate organization and incorporation as an elemental, indispensable part of the whole." Everything needed for the good life already existed; people needed to go beyond the advantages produced by the machine and their knowledge of society to rearrange and reconstitute culture to the goal of the fullest possible life for all people. "The care of those whose labors and plans create the solid structure of the community's life must be to unite culture in all its forms: as the care of the earth: as the disciplined seizure and use of energy toward the economic satisfaction of man's wants: as the nurture of the body, as the begetting and bearing of children, as the cultivation of each human being's fullest capacities as a sentient, feeling, thinking, acting personality: . . . of the

whole into that tissue of values that men are willing to die for rather than forswear--
religion."³⁸

By 1950, Mumford was more convinced than ever of the end of the metropolis. "Thirty years ago it took, perhaps, a little youthful brashness, as well as prophetic vision, to say that this metropolitan regime was destined to fall by its own weight; but today that fact should be obvious to everyone who even dimly discerns the signs of the times." The most important change the small town could make in its accommodation to a new economic era was that it should put aside the old assumption that its prime goal in life was to become a big town, or disappear. In the new regional order of things, the small town would have a natural role to play, which would not include adhering to "metropolitan dimensions." The small town exhibited by its very nature a human scale and a closeness to nature. Their functions would include soil conservation, "holding intact the great natural retreats," providing recreation and relaxation to weary city dwellers, and integrating agricultural and industrial systems. Towns in the future would be ruled by "organic limits to growth," surrounded by a permanent greenbelt, part of a larger regional authority, and only partially self-contained. Here, Mumford took issue with Howard's limitation on the size of garden cities, because he believed that 30,000 people could not sustain all the necessary facilities for the good life usually found in much larger cities. "If the growth of the small town must be limited, its limitations will be more acceptable if it becomes part of a regional constellation of cities, with a common regional government for its over-all activities, and with a capacity for mobilizing and distributing its cultural resources into each small town, instead of concentrating them Mumford relied on the new modes of communication and transportation to help accomplish this goal. He noted that America lacked a functioning example of the political and cultural unit necessary to bring about his vision. Yet, he wondered if a retooled and redesigned unit based on the old New England Township would constitute "an administrative organ capable of holding its own in competition with the

overgrown metropolis." What remained unclear from Mumford's presentation, however, was if such a locus of organization would be given the powers necessary for any regional authority to function properly; that is, the ability to float bonds, establish zoning rules, the power to start new towns, and the initiative to apply broad and general planning powers.³⁹

In any case, Mumford expressed great optimism that with the proper regional pooling of both purpose and resources, "the small town will not merely come abreast of the metropolitan center; it will surpass it." Many places cried out for small town building including the Tennessee Valley where the program failed to produce results consistent with small communitarian expectations. North Carolina exemplified another area which still had a bright rural future, but needed to guard against metropolitanization. In effect, Mumford wanted small communities to not revert to the ways of the good old days or to try and be like the big urban places, but to grow up culturally and still retain much of what made them special rural places. "What I have sought to demonstrate is that a balanced community, limited in size and area, limited in density, in close contact with the open country, is actually the new urban form for our civilization." Its achievement rests on deliberate planning carried out by regional authorities whose purview is larger than any one municipality. In this way, city and town could coexist to their mutual advantage. And wherever community was to be found, whether in urban or rural areas, its ultimate basis was the fundamental unit of the neighborhood, which preserved life and liberty. "For democracy, in any active sense, begins and ends in communities small enough for their members to meet face to face. Without such units, capable of independent and autonomous action, even the best-contrived central governments, . . . become party-oriented, indifferent to criticism, resentful of correction, . . . all too often, high-handed and dictatorial." This had always been Mumford's message: seeking unity in diversity, and creating locally meaningful expressions of the mystery of life within one fully human culture.⁴⁰

After 1940, many people from very different walks of life turned to the small community and its variants as a way of achieving a better balance between the locale and the larger society. Modern society often lacked comprehensibility and small places seemed to offer greater stability, security, and even sanity. Some opted for the traditional small town, as a type of social organization that had not lost its usefulness. For Anderson, it satisfied many of the deeper emotional and psychological needs fast-paced, big city life did not offer in abundance. Hicks explored the estrangement of the intellectual from the small town and concluded that they needed each other more than ever; with the help of intellectuals, revitalized small towns could more than hold their own in the contest that was the modern world. Mumford, however, sought the development of a new type of social organization--the garden city set in a regional context. This intermediate type of settlement would become the dominate form, supplanting the very big city and the very small town. Others like the unrepentent socialists Helen and Scott Nearing drifted into more or less hermetic existences, very loosely tied to their locales. Even proponents of issues not directly involved with small communities, like organic gardening for example, approached the concept of the small community by implication at least. J. I. Rodale's advocacy of whole foods and organic agriculture presupposed the vital interrelationship of healthy communities, soil, food, and people. The Nearing's preoccupation with those concepts too, attested to the interpenetration and convergence of a number of issues, causes, and goals under the umbrella of the small community movement. And for the most part, most of these participants did not reject modern culture out of hand, but hoped and worked for a rapproachment between it and small communities. These reactions to the excesses of the urban-industrial order produced programs for change which were themselves then new parts of the modern age. But as individuals with heterogeneous plans, they had to generally speak and write loudly in order for them to be heard at all in the hustle and bustle of the developing consumer-information-suburban culture.⁴¹

NOTES

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CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The desperate material and psychological conditions of the 1930s helped call into question the legitimacy of the prevailing cultural order, and spurred the search for viable alternatives to the developing mass society. In the 1940s, a minor wing of the opposition cultural tradition identified revitalized small communities as the ideal form around which to combat a cultural imbalance precariously tilted away from the locale and toward the larger territory--in the case of American culture, the nation. By the mid-forties, small communitarians like Arthur Morgan, Ralph Borsodi, Baker Brownell, and others constituted a small, but vocal reform movement. These reformers kept alive an utopian tradition from the literary regionalists of the thirties to the countercultural radicals of the sixties and seventies which centered on the small community. As such they lent continuity to the opposition tradition in American cultural history and enriched the theoretical bases of human community dynamics.

The emphasis on the small community united a diversity of thinkers, writers, and reformers who otherwise might not have had much in common, except for the land. It was this preoccupation with the spatial dimension of human organization which helped focus their attention on geographical places and the physical size of human settlements. Regionalists, social scientists (be they sociologists, psychologists, economists, or anthropologists), utopians, agrarians, or planners with iconoclastic and personal visions of the good society could all agree that smaller places generally fulfilled the requirements of human welfare better than bigger places. The only real argument on this score centered on

how small was "small," and how large was "big." As this period would draw down toward the sixties, the consensus tended to accept large towns and even small cities (less than 50,000) as places where elements of the small community were still alive. Urbanists like Mumford and Gans continued to argue persuasively that urban areas could still have personal and stable communities within their boundaries through the preservation of close, mutually supportive neighborhoods. Nevertheless, the principle of small community size operated there too, so the small communitarians were vindicated on that issue.

Whether the communitarians were successful at combating the marginalization of small settlements is unclear. Small towns continued to exist despite the continued flow of people out of rural, farm areas. In some ways their economies have become more diversified as factories have been located in small towns to take advantage of high quality labor forces and lower overhead costs. But many very small towns and villages have seen their fortunes decline along with their main street businesses. The renewed interest of the present in communities may mean that communitarians in the forties and fifties failed in their attempt, and so contemporary society must once again turn to save small places. Or else it may mean that the earlier communitarians succeeded by conserving small town society for us to use as a base for further communitarian development. Or it might mean both, in the sense that some classes of very small locales continued to have a tough time making it, while centers of culture like college towns, regional shopping towns, and county seats have generally thrived. The forces of the mass marketplace have remained dominant in spite of all attempts at modulation and moderation, and no one ideology seems to have the kind of power required to redirect the energies of growth and development. Some have pointed to those processes and identified them as part of a larger ideology or world view which has colored American history seemingly from the start. It was this belief in unlimited material wealth which the small communitarians, in part, fought against. Whether they had an effect on that element of

the American world view is unknown, and is part perhaps, of another study. However, their message is very similar to that of present-day environmentalists, ecologists, and humanists.

Thus, it is evident that the small communitarians were not escapists from modernity; on the contrary, they are in harmony with environmentalism which evolved from the conservationists' doctrine of efficient use of resources--a persistent theme in the scientific thinking and managerial approaches inherent in modernism. The small communitarians' use of science and reason involved social scientists, particularly rural sociologists, whose studies provided a great deal of ammunition in their offensive against mass society. Many rural sociologists were allies to the communitarian cause, while a few like Karl Kraenzel, active in the writing of the Northern Plains in a World of Change, were primary participants in the movement.

Yet it was generally not the social scientists who had the greatest impact on this reform cause, but the novelists, writers, theorists, and dreamers who created new visions of the good life and good society. Some of these visionaries including Ralph Borsodi, Scott Nearing, Louis Bromfield, and Lewis Mumford were rediscovered by a new generation in the sixties and seventies, having their earlier books reprinted and put to new, but similar purposes. This being the case, it is somewhat surprising that Baker Brownell is not better known today, since he was the acknowledged "guru" of the small communitarian movement. In any case, having gained some amount of attention in the time when they lived, they perhaps have garnered more attention after their deaths, and that fact speaks to a successful staying power and a certain relevance and even prescience in an age that is still dealing with the problems and promise of the modern mass society.

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Louis Bromfield, in Friends of the Land Collection, Archives/Library Division, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio.

Baker Brownell Papers, Northwestern University Archives, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

Granville Hicks Papers, Department of Special Collections, E. S. Bird Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

Arthur Morgan Papers, Antiochiana, Olive Kettering Library, Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio.

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